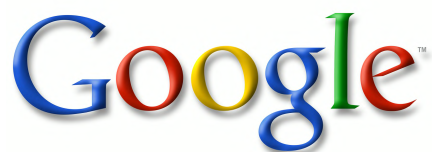

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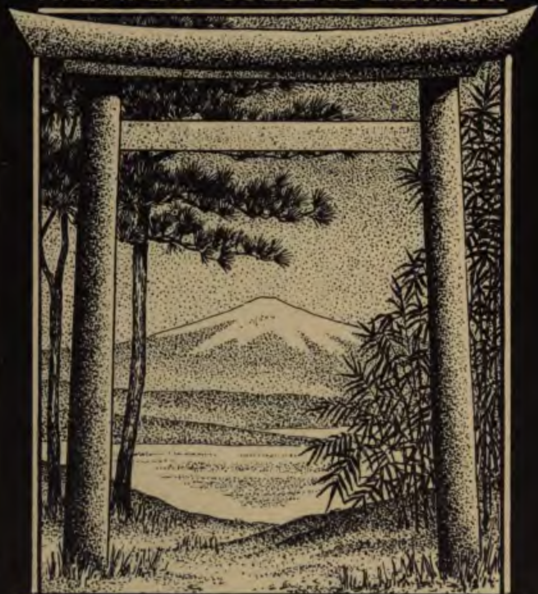

E. G. STILLMAN, '08, M.D.
JAPANESE COLLECTION

LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF AN IMPRESSIONIST

EARLY WRITINGS

BY

LAFCADIO HEARN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

FERRIS GREENSLET

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

1911

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. . . Jeune artiste, tu attends un sujet? Tout est sujet; le sujet c'est toi-même: ce sont tes impressions, tes émotions devant la nature. C'est toi qu'il faut regarder, et non autour de toi.

Eugène Delacroix.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

FLORIDIAN REVERIES

TO THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH 35

A TROPICAL INTERMEZZO 59

A NAME IN THE PLAZA 76

VULTUR AURA 86

CREOLE PAPERS

QUAINT NEW ORLEANS AND ITS HABITANTS 97

CREOLE WOMEN IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES 111

ARABESQUES

ARABIAN WOMEN 141

RABYAH'S LAST RIDE 162

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I

On a memorable day a good many years ago a certain sub-editor, exploring the morning's mail, found his sense enthralled by a weird, sad, delicious odor. Perfumes in the mail were not unheard-of: violets there had been, and musk, and orange blossoms, and tobacco; and the sub-editor, with a fantasy appropriate to his station, even prided himself on his ability to close his eyes and pick out a California contribution by the unaided sense of smell. But never before had there been anything like this. Its chief essence was sandalwood, that was clear, but sandalwood so etherealized and mingled with I know not what of exotic scents that it gave to the imagination a provocative ghostly thrill indescribable. The basket of the Muses, hastily tumbled, disclosed a portentous envelope

of straw color, with queer blue stamps in one corner, and queer unknown characters in another; yet queerest of all was the address in an odd orientalized hand, done with delicate, curiously curving strokes of the pen. Within, in a script still less Spencerian, these words met the sub-editor's excited eye: —

The Dream of Akinosuké

'In the district called Toïchi of Yamato province, there used to live a gōshi named Miyata Akinosuké'; and so on through some twenty pages, telling a mystical legend of old Japan in a lovely and melodious English style.

This was the writer's first introduction to Lafcadio Hearn, known to him up to that time only by a somewhat formidable repute as 'the best interpreter of Japan,' and mentally scheduled for perusal on a convenient opportunity which had never come. Since then Hearn's twenty volumes have been read and reread; there has been

correspondence with his family and friends and with some who were not his friends; his complicated life has been investigated in detail; yet the sharpness, the intensity, of that first experience of his quality is not blurred. The impression that persists is that of weird, sad, delicious savor, of ghostly thrill.

This is not the place in which to retell in detail the romantic story of Hearn's oddly characteristic life, but if we briefly recall its main outlines in relation to the parallel outlines of his work, we shall perhaps find an added interest and significance in the examples of his early writing hereinafter collected.

Born in that Ionian Isle where Sappho destroyed herself for love, the child of an Irishman and a Greek, with an added strain of gypsy blood, Hearn first takes on a human tangibility when we find him deserted by his parents and living in the ultra-religious household of a great-aunt in Wales, a

little dark-eyed, dark-faced, passionate boy, 'with a wound in his heart and gold rings in his ears.' In the fragments of autobiography dealing with this time, which Mrs. Wetmore has printed, we find his visionary little mind occupied with highly significant images, — the horrors of hell-fire, ghosts, and 'the breasts of nymphs in the brake,' soon to be blotted out from the plates in his favorite book by the priest who had his education in charge.

After a romantic though somewhat vague Odyssey of misfortune, Hearn finally emerges in Cincinnati at the age of twenty as 'Old Semi-Colon,' a proof-reader and budding journalist by profession, a 'flame-hearted' artist in words by aspiration. His appearance at this time, as a striking bearded portrait shows, was that of a Parisian poet not yet 'arrived'; and that side of his temperament, which later made him style himself, half in irony, half in penitence, 'a vicious, French-hearted scalawag,' was then, perhaps, most restive.

He attended spiritualistic séances, he tried a little opium, and made other fantastic experiments in life. But these are topics that need not concern us here. The important point is that with the Cincinnati period the tale of Hearn's career as a literary artist begins. He 'devours' Hoffmann and writes marvelous murder-stories for the Sunday edition of his paper; he studies the methods of those great *prosateurs*, Flaubert and Gautier; and finally, before leaving Cincinnati in 1877, he completes the translation of the tales of Gautier which he published some years later as 'One of Cleopatra's Nights and Other Fantastic Romances.'

In conveying the flavor of a strongly-flavored writer the work was singularly successful. It was dedicated 'To the lovers of the loveliness of the antique world, the lovers of artistic beauty and artistic truth.' A dedication to the lovers of *macabre* would have been more appropriate. In his choice of tales, in his gusto in

the rendering of certain passages, in the 'flowers of the yew' which he thought best to add in an appendix, Hearn showed himself more macabresque than his master.

In 1877, Hearn, following apparently some temperamental attraction, moved to New Orleans.

As we look at the decade of his life there, the notable thing now is the growth of his artistic, and still more of his intellectual, power. At first his imagination was captured by the strange, tropical, intoxicating beauty of the old Creole city, its social and ethnological contrasts, its mysterious underworld, and barbaric cults. He felt it to be his artistic duty, he writes, 'to be absorbed into this new life and study its form and color and passion.' Yet little more than a year later we find him in a mood of disillusion and of something resembling remorse. He writes to Mr. H. E. Krehbiel: —

'I am very weary of New Orleans. The first delightful impression it produced has

vanished. The city of my dreams, bathed in the gold of eternal summer, and perfumed with amorous odours of orange flowers, has vanished like one of those phantom cities of South America swallowed up centuries ago by earthquakes, but reappearing at long intervals to delude travellers. What remains is something horrible, like the tombs here, — material and moral rottenness which no pen can do justice to. You must have read some of those mediæval legends in which the amorous youth finds the beautiful witch he has embraced all through the night crumble into a mass of calcined bones and ashes in the morning. Well, I feel like such a one, and almost regret that, unlike the victims of these diabolical illusions, I do not find my hair whitened and my lips withered by sudden age; for I enjoy exuberant vitality and still seem to myself like one buried alive or left alone in some city cursed with desolation like that described by Sinbad the sailor. No literary circle here; no jovial

coterie of journalists; no associates save those vampire ones of which the less said the better. And the thought — Where must all this end? — may be laughed off in the daytime, but always returns to haunt me like a ghost in the night.'

Later, his advantageous connection with the 'Times-Democrat,' and his friendship with some of the most interesting and cultivated people of the city, made him happier in his residence there. From 1881, the date of the passage quoted, his preoccupation is more and more with books, and the things of the intellect and imagination, with 'the life of vanished cities and the pageantry of dead faiths,' less and less with 'vampire' associates. Yet still he purchases queer books, follows queer subjects, and 'pledges himself to the worship of the Odd, the Queer, the Strange, the Exotic, the Monstrous,' which, as he writes, 'suits my temperament.'

The chief literary expression of this impulse in its early phase was his 'Stray

Leaves from Strange Literatures,' chiefly written before 1883, and published two years later. This, a series of reconstructions of what impressed him as most fantastically beautiful in the most exotic literature he was able to obtain, shows a remarkable growth in mere craftsmanship over his translations from Gautier. The cadences are surer, the weird or gorgeous pictures built up from simpler words, and the exotic atmosphere is more enveloping and persuasive.

But the handful of arabesques that Hearn brought together in his 'Stray Leaves from Strange Literatures' was only a drop in the bucket that came up brimming from that deep well of 'the Odd, the Queer, the Strange, the Exotic, the Monstrous.' In the first five years of his work for the 'Times-Democrat,' he made and printed in the paper no fewer than two hundred translations of French stories and striking chapters or passages from the French books that engaged his eager at-

tention. When we remember that the bulk of these versions were from the writings of the greatest contemporary masters of French prose, — thirty-one were from Maupassant, — we become aware of at least one of the sources of that extraordinary growth in Hearn's mastery of his instrument that can be seen when we compare the suave and luminous current of the prose of 'Some Chinese Ghosts' in 1887, with the volume from Gautier, or even with the 'Stray Leaves.'

It was at this time, too, that Hearn, forsaking translation for original work, began to follow the leading of his imagination into characteristic paths. The readers of the 'Times-Democrat,' largely, of course, of French descent, gave him a sympathetic public for a type of work that could perhaps have appeared in no other paper in America. He printed, even apparently with a certain *réclame*, curious, condensed, personalized paraphrases of out of the way books, like Perron's 'Femmes Arabes,'

and other curious investigations of the Exotic, and passed easily from this into such excursions in aromatic impressionism as those that record his vacation in Florida, colored by his reading of Gaffarel's 'Floride Française,'[1] or his studies of the Creole life and language.

It is this group of papers, of special interest and significance to the student of Hearn, — themselves marked by the rich beginnings of his characteristic charm, — that have been selected to form the bulk of the present volume. Hearn himself at one time began to prepare for the press a collection of these papers, with the 'Floridian Reveries' as its initial section. Indeed, there is before me as I write a manuscript title-page done with those queer, curiously curving strokes of the pen, reading, —

[1] It was a happy coincidence which, within a week of the search in the Boston Public Library that revealed the literary sources of these writings, brought me from Japan, the gift of Mrs. Hearn, this very book from Hearn's own collection of works dealing with the Odd, the Queer, etc.

EPHEMERAE

Leaves from the Diary of an Impressionist

and bearing the striking motto from Delacroix that stands at the beginning of the present volume. Apparently it was Hearn's intention to add to the 'Floridian Reveries' a little collection of 'Fantastics,' with such savory titles as 'Aïda,' 'The Devil's Carbuncle,' 'A Hemisphere in a Woman's Hair,' 'The Fool and Venus,' etc.

This group, however, is, unfortunately, lost. From the notebook labeled upon its cover 'Fantastics' many leaves have been cut, and there remains only the paper on 'Arabian Women,' which appears hereafter. The Creole papers have been selected from the vast number of essays that Hearn wrote upon this subject, as showing best, perhaps, the peculiar direction of his interests. Taken as a whole, the material here offered to the reader marks the end of Hearn's first literary period, the period of

translation and paraphrase, of 'literary journalism.'

The year 1883, as readers of his letters know, marked an epoch in Hearn's intellectual life. Then for the first time he read Herbert Spencer, and by a singular paradox conceived a passionate adoration for that passionless philosopher who, we may think, had the peculiar advantage of knowing so much about the 'Unknowable.' The secret of the paradox seems to have been that Spencer's vast synthetic panorama of the universe, outer and inner, was precisely the kind of vision to attract Hearn's gypsy intellect, so long bewildered by the 'pageantry of dead faiths,' so long obsessed by the incommunicable sorrow of the world, yet pledged to the quest of 'the absolute' by the forces of his Celtic and Hellenic ancestry. At any rate the philosophy of Spencer came to him with something of the power and unction of an evangelical religion, bringing

with it not only conversion, but 'conviction of sin,' and 'regeneration.' From this time on, there was a new seriousness in his life and a new gravity in his work. Henceforth he was concerned about the Exotic and Monstrous chiefly as they could be employed as parables of the gospel according to Herbert Spencer.

A year or two later there came into his work another strain that was to remain potent, — the tropical. As early as 1879 he had felt the spell, and had written: 'So I draw my chair to the fire, light my pipe *de terre* Gambièse, and in the flickering glow weave fancies of palm trees and ghostly reefs and tepid winds, and a Voice from the far tropics calls to me across the darkness.'

In 1884 he made the visit to Grande Isle in the Mexican Gulf that resulted in his 'Chita,' which is still in many respects his most astonishing *tour de force* in word-painting, though in it we see how far away he was from the English tradition of creative art in fiction. The only logic in the

harrowing conclusion is the emotional logic of a temperament immitigably macabresque, that must make a tale of terror intensify in poignancy to the end.

In 1887, he went to the French West Indies, and found there a theme perhaps more in consonance with the full richness of his vein than any he afterwards encountered. In 'Youma,' his West Indian novelette, the note is certainly falsetto, but in his 'Two Years in the French West Indies' the luxuriant leafiness of his style, heavy with tropical perfumes, subtly interpenetrated with the sense of tropical terror, rarely goes beyond the bounds of faithful depiction. And underneath it all we begin to see that impressive Spencerian perception of the fatal unity of the world.

In June, 1888, Hearn landed in New York, but drunken as he was with tropic light, he was troubled by the canyoned streets, and returned to Martinique by the same boat that had brought him. In the following year he was in Philadelphia,

preparing his West Indian books for the press. At this time he suddenly conceived a passionate and characteristic interest in Japan from reading Mr. Percival Lowell's 'The Soul of the Far East.' His correspondence is full of it. 'How luminous,' he exclaims, 'how psychically electric!' It was with boundless delight and with the highest hopes that he welcomed a suggestion that he should go to Japan to prepare a series of articles upon that country.

As one who reads Hearn's writings chronologically passes from the West Indian books to the Japanese, there is evident a remarkable change, not only of atmosphere but of tone, and, despite the continuity of the Spencerian preoccupation, of what we may perhaps call 'soul.' The tropical luxuriance of his earlier manner has been replaced by quieter tints and subtler cadences, and henceforth he gives free rein to his faculty only in rare heightened passages, which rise above the narrow,

quiet stream of his habitual prose with an effect incomparably telling. In part this was the result of his sensitive perception of the peculiar color of Japanese landscape, 'a domesticated Nature, which loves man, and makes itself beautiful in a quiet gray-and-blue way like the Japanese women'; which must in consequence be reproduced in water-color rather than in the oils in which he had been working. In part it was the result of his greater maturity, and that assured control over his medium, which left him no impulse to mere virtuosity. But still more, one thinks as one reads the letters, it was the result of happier and more normal conditions of life. As a professor of English literature, he had something approaching a secure social and economic position. As the friend of men like Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain, and Paymaster Mitchell McDonald, some of his oddities were neutralized. (He felt always more of a man, he said, after contact with their reality, 'like Antæus,

who got stronger every time his feet touched the solid ground.') As the father of three boys and the head of a Japanese household of eleven persons, he had for the first time a stake in the world. And finally in what was clearly a marriage of almost miraculous suitability for him, his restless spirit found a measure of peace.

II

Lafcadio Hearn has been called a 'decadent'; the word does not signify, but if by it is meant, as sometimes seems to be, a humanist without physique, there is a considerable measure of truth in its application. If one symptom of decadence be the love of words for their own sake, it was, as we have seen, not lacking in his earlier work. There is, however, nothing more unjust to most human beings then the application to them of tags that have taken their color from trite literary usage and hasty popular association with a few notorious characters. This is especially true

in Hearn's case. In 1885 he wrote to W. D. O'Connor: 'If my little scraggy hand tells you anything, you ought to recognize in it a very small, erratic, eccentric, irregular, impulsive, nervous disposition, — almost your antitype in everything except the love of the beautiful.' The *advocatus diaboli* himself could scarcely have done better. Erratic, eccentric, irregular, impulsive, nervous, Hearn undoubtedly was; and these qualities, enhanced as they were by self-pity, so far from being what the psychologists call 'independent variables,' were of the very essence of his faculty. 'Unless,' he writes, 'somebody does or says something horribly mean to me I can't do certain kinds of work'; and again: 'I have found that the possessor of pure horse-health never seems to have an idea of the "half-lights." It is impossible to see the psychical undercurrents of human existence without that self-separation from the purely physical part of being that severe sickness gives like a revelation.'

For all his fine Byronic swimming of straits and wide bays Hearn was never the possessor of 'pure horse-health,' and it is pretty clear that to his lack of it, to his trembling sense of the hard attrition of the world, we owe his marvelous mastery of the 'half-light.' Yet this was not so much 'morbidness' in our English sense, as *morbidezza*, the quality of mellow-tinted color and soft harmonies. Late in life he wrote, 'I like Kipling's morbidness, which is manly and full of enormous resolve and defiance in the truth of God and Hell and Nature, — but the other — no!' Of 'the other' there is little trace in his own latest work.

The chief morbid factor in Hearn's physical constitution was his vision. One eye was totally blind, the other had, it is said, but one twentieth of normal vision; but too much has been made of this as a qualification of his genius. His monocular vision gave him, of course, landscape 'flat,' without perspective and depth; but undoubtedly, like the half-closed eye of the

painter, it gave him color in wonderful harmonious intensity, and who shall say that it was with a vividness beyond Nature? The tremendous cumulative rhapsody of blue at the beginning of his 'Two Years in the French West Indies' is said by those who best know the Southern seas not to exceed reality. And there is plenty of evidence that in his quick, comprehending glances through the single eyeglass that he habitually carried, he seized minute significant details of persons or objects which others missed. It has been said by one who should be qualified to know, that he saw his world as partially and obscurely as one who looks through the large end of an opera-glass; but the analogy is imperfect unless we remember that objects so seen are given not only with remoteness, but with rich color, and with a curious artistic composition like a Claude in miniature.

But after all it was the lens in the brain that counted with Hearn. As opposed to

his vision, his visionary faculty was of the first order. From boyhood, 'ghostly' was his characteristic, as it finally came to be almost his trick word. He envisaged wraiths and vanished cities with a definition more like that of objective than of subjective sight. Only his skeptical intelligence kept him from being a thoroughgoing spirit-seer. Perhaps his most characteristic mood was that reflected in his impressive essay on 'Dust' in 'Gleanings from Buddha Fields'—'I have the double sensation of being myself a ghost and of being haunted,—haunted by the prodigious luminous spectre of the world.'

It is not necessary to go much further about to apprehend the inner nature of Lafcadio Hearn. In the same 'Dust' there is a 'lyrical' paragraph that conveys him very perfectly:—

'I confess that "my mind to me a kingdom is"—not! Rather it is a fantastical republic, daily troubled by more revolutions than ever occurred in South America;

and the nominal government, supposed to be rational, declares that an eternity of such anarchy is not desirable. I have souls wanting to soar in air, and souls wanting to swim in water (sea-water, I think), and souls wanting to live in woods or on mountain tops.' And so on through a Homeric catalogue of his souls, till at the end he breaks out, '*I* an individual, — an individual soul! Nay, I am a population, — a population unthinkable for multitude, even by groups of a thousand millions!'

Half-fantastic this passage may very well be, but none the less it is the faithful reflection of a temperament lacking the sane integrity of perfect health, a nature at odds with itself through many warring inheritances and subtle rebellions of the blood, yet mastered at the last in most of its human relations by a character essentially fine.

The final estimation of Hearn's work is impeded by its scattered bulk, but when

in the fullness of time it is finally brought together in a collected edition it will be seen to stand very high in the second class of English prose, the class of the great *prosateurs*, Sir Thomas Browne, Thomas De Quincey, Walter Pater.

Had he lived longer his rank might have been higher still. He had outgrown his old decadent conception of style as separable from substance, as an end to be attained in itself, to be arrived at by miners' work in dictionaries and thesauri. His work never ceased to be conscious art, but in his very latest writing there is a perfect fusion of his vigorous imaginative thought in the melancholy music of his cadenced prose. Toward the end of his life he had dreams more ambitious even than the stylistic ambitions of his youth so amply realized. In 1895 he wrote, 'I really think I have stored away in me somewhere powers larger than any I have yet been able to use. Of course I don't mean that I have any hidden wisdom or anything of that

sort, but I believe I have some power to reach the public emotionally if conditions allow.' Still later the project is explicitly stated: 'a single short, powerful philosophical story, of the most emotional and romantic sort.' 'I feel within me,' he writes, 'the sense of such a story — vaguely, like the sense of a perfume or the smell of a spring wind which you cannot define. But the chances are that a more powerful mind than mine will catch the inspiration first, as the highest peak most quickly takes the sun.'

Whether his imagination, with all its activity, had quite the creative, shaping energy ever to fulfill this dream, we shall never know. But it is certain at any rate that the last of his work, published posthumously, shows both a broadening and a deepening of what, despite the artifice of his method, we may justly call his inspiration. Had he lived to complete the imaginative autobiography of which fragments are printed in his 'Life and Letters,'

it might have proved his masterpiece. The fragments have a sincere and haunting poignancy, and his prose was never more vivid and musical. For all that 'population' within him, his own intellectual and imaginative life had been marked by a unity that would doubtless have induced a corresponding unity in the book, with striking artistic results.

The integrity of Hearn's intellectual life consisted in his strangely single-hearted devotion to both artistic beauty and scientific truth. And precisely in this, I believe, lies the significance of his work. He was, in a certain sense, the most Lucretian of modern writers. It has been said that, as Spinoza was 'a man drunk with God,' so Lucretius was 'a man drunk with natural law.' Well, Hearn was a man drunk with Herbert Spencer, and in all save the accident of form he was the poet of Spencerian evolution. As Lucretius, preaching his tremendous doctrine of the monstrous, eternal rain of atoms through

the world, wove into his great poem the beauty of the old mythology, the tragedy of passionate humanity, so Hearn, in his gentler fashion, steadily envisaged the horror that envelops the stupendous universe of modern science, and by evoking and reviving ancient myths and immemorial longings, cast over the darkness a ghostly light of vanished suns.

In the final paragraph of his 'Romance of the Milky Way,' — the River Celestial along which, in Japanese mythology, the spirits of the dead return to meet their loves beneath the moon, — we have the heart of Lafcadio Hearn: —

'Perhaps the legend of Tanabata, as it was understood by those old poets, can make but a faint appeal to Western minds. Nevertheless, in the silence of transparent nights, before the rising of the moon, the charm of the ancient tale sometimes descends upon me, out of the scintillant sky, — to make me forget the monstrous facts of science, and the stupendous horror of

Space. Then I no longer behold the Milky Way as that awful Ring of the Cosmos, whose hundred million suns are powerless to lighten the Abyss, but as the very Amanagowa itself, — the River Celestial. I see the thrill of its shining stream, and the mists that hover along its verge, and the water-grasses that bend in the winds of autumn. White Orihimé I see at her starry loom, and the Ox that grazes on the farther shore; and I know that the falling dew is the spray from the Herdsman's oar. And the heaven seems very near and warm and human; and the silence about me is filled with the dream of a love unchanging, immortal, — forever yearning and forever young, and forever left unsatisfied by the paternal wisdom of the gods.'

If, as some hold, the problem of modern romantic literary art has been to portray the human spirit caught in a magic web of necessity, 'penetrating us with a network subtler than our subtlest nerves'; to marry

strangeness with beauty; to accomplish all this in a style as express and gleaming as goldsmith's work; then few writers have solved it more brilliantly than Lafcadio Hearn.

FLORIDIAN REVERIES

TO THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

May 2, 188–

ACROSS the Floridian barrens to the sea, — a long night and a longer day of steam-travel over light powdery soil, the tint of hour-glass sand, whose dust filters like a ruddy fog through the joints of the double-windows and tightly-fitting doors of the sleeping-car; furious travel through wildernesses of yellow pine, whose naked and mastlike stems forever twinklingly intercross before one's tired eyes with the rapidity of lightning. The smoke of the engine descends to mingle with the low hanging cloud of ruddy dust; the sun, which rose in advance of us, is now behind us, but there is yet no variation in the monotony of the woods. Sometimes the train halts at a rustic station, — buildings of painted pine relieved against the endless background of living trees; the smoke floats off slowly

through the heavy afternoon; the red dust settles lazily; and one rushes to the platform to snatch a breath of purer air, and to peer expectantly westward. Still nothing; — only the colonnades of pine filing away eternally to right and left, and the lurid road stretching endlessly backward and onward with its two streaks of iron light converging toward either horizon, — and the voice of a bird in some green hiding-place, breaking the hot stillness with plaintive triple cry of 'Sweet! — sweet! — sweet!' — repeated over and over again at drowsy intervals. Never a variation in the frondescence, never a flower; the melancholy of the land has begun to weigh upon you like a pain. Our city minds, our city eyes, accustomed to the relief of contrast, are tormented by creations of such perpetual sameness, of such enormous monotony, of such never-varying beauty as Nature devises in her own solitudes. These shadowy infinitudes do not seem formed for the gaze of the

nineteenth century; their boundless uniformity rather inspires dreams of those coniferous growths which burdened the land in ages preceding the apparition of man, — when there were yet neither blossoms nor perfumes, neither saccharine secretions nor succulent fruits, — ere even the hum of honey-loving insects was heard, or the beauty of butterflies had been formed, or the nations of the ants had yet begun to toil, — and all the earth was green.

Then a scream of steam, a mighty jolt; and the thunder-rattle recommences, and the train again begins to rock in mad storms of dust and smoke, and the red sun ignites a stupendous conflagration behind the pillars of the pines. At last, under the moon, there is another shriek of steam; the wheels slacken, rumble jerkingly, then roll slowly and silently, as if muffled, with occasional squeak, and pause with a final shock; while through hastily opened windows and doors, a strong cool air dashes

in, — the breath of the great St. Johns River, sweetened by mingling with the mightier breath of the sea, and bearing with it scent of orange flowers and odors of magnolia.

And in the purple night, under the palpitation of stars, Jacksonville opens all her electric eyes.

May 4, 188–

Morning inundates the streets with its fluid gold; the trees drink in the brightness; the plate-glass of store-fronts flames like immense jewel-facets; — and what singular stores these are! — mostly curiosity shops! Here are dealers in strange flowers, flowers formed of iridescent fish-scales, — in jointed walking canes of shark's vertebræ, — in tropical shells, bearing paintings of sabals and cypresses upon their nacreous inner surface, — in splendid screens made of the spoils of white herons and sea-eagles, — in sea-beans and sea-porcupines and seaweed fans and polished shells of the sea-turtle,

— in alligator-eggs and stuffed alligators, and live alligators in boxes, — in alligators' teeth, burnished and gold-mounted as brooches, as cuff-buttons, as necklace ornaments, as earrings. Atavism in the evolution of the lapidary's art, — an unconscious return of fashion to the savage bijoutry of fossil races! After perhaps not less than half-a-million of years our boasted civilization finds æsthetic joy in the art of the Tertiary Epoch; and in the bud-smooth lobule of her dainty ear, the modern beauty does not hesitate to hang even such a decoration as that worn many thousand centuries ago by some primitive beauty, — tall daughters of mammoth-hunters and lion-slayers.

The breath of the sea quivers in the emerald of the trees, and, sea-like, the broad St. Johns washes the feet of the white town. In the shadow of the wharves the water is deeply green and glossy as the surface of a magnolia leaf; further out it brightens and changes to sky-color, and

cools off into steel-tint near the opposite shore. Violet bands moving over the immense breadth of the flood betray the course of mysterious currents. A long promontory, piercing the miles of unruffled water, mirrors the golden-greens, and sap-greens, and sombre greens of its unbroken woods; but much further away, across the enormous curve, the forest lines, steeped in the infinite bath of azure light, turn blue. As through high gates of green, the eye looks up the vast turn into a cerulean world; and it is through these rich portals that you may sail into the region of legend and romance, — that you may reach those subterranean rivers, those marvelous volcanic springs haunted by dim traditions of the Fountain of Youth, and by the memory of the good gray knight who sought its waters in vain.

And though the days of faith be dead, men look for that Phantom-Fountain still. Yearly, from the gray cities of wintry lands thousands hasten to the eternal sum-

mer of this perfumed place, to find new life, new strength — to seek rejuvenescence in the balm of the undying groves, in the purity of rock-born springs, in the elixir-breath of this tropical Nature, herself eternally young with the luminous youth of the gods. And multitudes pass away again to duller lands, to darker skies, rejuvenated indeed, — the beauty with rose-bloom brightened, the toiler with force renewed, — feeling they have left behind them here something of their hearts, something of their souls, caught like Spanish moss on the spiked leaves of the palms, on the outstretched arms of the cedars.

Why River-worship should have held so large a place in the ancient religions of the world, I thought I could more fully comprehend on that aureate afternoon, — while our white steamer clove her way toward a long succession of purple promontories that changed to green at our approach, and the city was fading away behind us in

smoke of gold. Blue miles of water to right and left; the azure enormity ever broadening and brightening before. Viewing the majesty of the flood, the immortal beauty of the domed forests crowning its banks, the day-magic of colors shifting and interblending through leagues of light, a sense of inexpressible reverence fills the mind of the observer, — a sense of the divinity of Nature, the holiness of beauty. These are the visions we must call celestial; this is the loveliness that is sacred, that is infinite, — the poetry of heaven. Through the splendor of blue there seemed to float to my memory as sounds float to the ear, some verses of an ancient Indian hymn, whereof the authorship has been ascribed even to the Spirit of the Universe: '*I am the sweetness of waters, the light of moon and sun, the perfume of earth, the splendor of fire. . . . I am the Soul in all that lives;—Time-without-end am I, and the life of things to be, the Spirit celestial and supreme,* MOST ANCIENT AND MOST EXCELLENT OF POETS.'

The sun dropped through a lake of orange light, and there were lilac tints in the sky, and ghostly greens. Then the great indigo darkness came; stars sparkled out; the boat chanted her steam-song, slackened her speed before a yellow glimmering of lamps, and halted at the wharves of Palatka. Here we bade her farewell; too huge a craft she was for the pilgrimage we wished to make to the mysterious fountain. Slender and light the boat must be that makes the journey thither, — a voyage upon stranger waters than these: no giant stream like the St. Johns, but a dim river with an Indian name, a narrow river undulating through the forest like some slow serpent unrolling its hundred coils of green. And, as a greater serpent devours a lesser one, so the writhing Ocklawaha swallows the shining current that flows from the Silver Spring.

Seated that evening on a balcony that jutted out under the star-light, above the crests of palmettos, I pondered upon the

legend of the Fountain. It was among the Bahamas that Juan Ponce de Leon first sought for the waters of youth, — striving to discover some island vapory and vague as Hesperus, and questioning curiously the Indians of the Archipelago. Then it was he heard of the mainland where 'the wished-for waters flowed as a river upon whose banks lived the rejuvenated races in serene idleness and untold luxuriance.' Was this a rumor of the spring with a silver name, whose waters indeed 'flow as a river'? — or was it an Indian tale of some other one of those many and wondrous Floridian sources whose unfathomed transparencies own the iridescent magnificence of jewel-fire? Or might not the valiant Spaniard have heard in his boyhood some Moorish story of that mystic fountain which the Prophet Khader alone of all God's creatures was permitted to find? And that Moslem tradition itself, had it not been brought to Islam by Arabian travelers to the further East, — as a bud from the

marvelous garden of Hindoo myth, — a fairy-flower created by the poet-wizards of India, — a blossom of parable, perchance, called into being by the lips of Buddha? 'Not wholly thus,' deep scholars answer; 'for the legend of Gautama is only a poem evolved from ancient myths of the Sun-god; and the fable of the Fountain doubtless first sprang from the primitive belief that the Day-star, whose glory waned with evening, nightly renewed the strength of his splendor by bathing in the fountains of Ocean, — in the enchanted waters of the West.' Perhaps, perhaps! — But can we boldly aver that the beautiful myth is not more ancient still, — old as love, — old as the mourning for the dead, — old as the heart of man, and its dreams of the eternal, and its desires of the impossible?

May 5, 188-

From the deck of the slender Osceola, looking up the river, the eye can seldom see more than a hundred yards of the Ockla-

waha at one time: so sudden and so multitudinous are the turns of the stream that the boat seems ever steering straight for land,—continually moving into fluvial recesses without an exit. But always as she seems about to touch the bank, a wooded point detaches itself from the masses of verdure,—a sharp curve betrays its secret,—a new vista terminating in new mysteries of green, opens its gates to our prow. Narrow and labyrinthine the river is, but so smooth that like a flood of quicksilver it repeats inversely all the intricacies of tangle-growths, all delicate details of leaf and blossom, all the bright variations of foliage-color. And gradually one discerns a law of system in those diversities of tint,—an ordination in the variety of tree-forms. Near the water the swamp-growth is dwarfed, tufted, irregular, but generally bright of hue; further back it rises to majestic maturity, offering a long succession of domes and cupolas of frondescence, alternated with fantastic min-

arets of cypress; behind all, the solid and savage forest towers like a battlement, turret above turret, crown above crown, — oak and ash, maple and pine. The dominant tone is the light green of the pines and the gum trees, and the younger ranks of cypress; but the elder cypress and the myrtles, and the younger ash, break through with darker masses of color. Singularly luminous greens also shine out at intervals in the wreathings of love-vines and in the bursts of sweet-bay. But whether radiant or sombre, the color is seen as through a gauze, — through the gray veil ubiquitously woven by the aerial moss that fringes every crest, that drools from every twig, that droops in myriad festoons, that streams in hoary cascades from every protruding bough. And mistletoe mingles with the moss, and air-plants nestle in the armpits of the cypresses, and orchids bloom on dead limbs; while, from the morass below, extraordinary parasitic things, full of snaky beauty, climb and twine and interwreathe,

often to lose their strangling hold at last, and fall back in spiral coils.

Then also, to right and left, broad bands of translucent green begin to edge the river surface, — the nations of the water-lilies uprearing their perfumed heads, — some whiter than moon-light, some yellower than gold. All start and tremble at our passing, as though suddenly aroused from slumber; and I long watch them nodding in our wake, more and more drowsily, slowly settling down to dream again.

Rarely there comes a break in the solid leagues of forest-wall, — a deep space filled with celestial color, a golden green, the green of orange-groves, — making the wilder tints of nature turn spectral by contrast. These indeed are the veritable Gardens of Hesperides, and theirs the bright fruit of Greek legend, — those Apples of Gold the Demigod sought in mythic islands of the Western Sea, — that Hippomenes, hard-pressed in the race of love,

cast before the flying feet of Atalanta. For the orange hath its mythology.

Little frogs, metallically bright as the lily-leaves on which they sit, chant in chorus; butterflies flutter on vermilion wing from bank to bank; sometimes the nose of an alligator furrows the river. The palmettos, heretofore rare, begin to multiply; they assemble in troops, in ranks, in legions. And other gracious forms appear,—true palms, — satin-skinned and wonderfully tall. They hold themselves aloof from the cypresses and the oaks; they don no draperies of moss — proudly majestic in the elegance of their naked beauty. They approach the flood, yet shrink from it with feminine timidity; if the treacherous soil yield beneath their feet, still, by some miracle of poise, they save themselves from fall. Then wonderful indeed is the suppleness of their curves; the neck of the ostrich, the body of the serpent, seem less lithely beautiful. Theirs is never the admirable but inflexible stature of the

pine; the bodies of all are comely with indulation; they balance as in a dance; they poise as in a ballet, — a fairy saraband of *coryphineæ*.

What wonder that the comeliness of the palm should have been by ancient faith deemed divine; that, among all trees of earth, this should have been chosen as the symbol of light, of victory, of riches, of generation! Sacred to the sun, and to the goddess NIKÉ (whose appellation was *Dea Palmaris*), — emblem of immortality for the Orphic poets, — blessed also by the Christ and by him selected even as the token of salvation, — ancient truly is the right of the palm to reverence as divinest of trees. Yet not less ancient its claim to pre-eminence of beauty. Arab and Greek and Hebrew poets discovered in its shapeliness the most puissant comparison for human grace; the soft name Thamar signifies a palm; the charm of woman has been likened to the pliant symmetry of the tree by the bard of the Odyssey, by the

wild authors of the Moallakat, and by the singer of the Song of Songs.

Darkness comes without a moon; and the torch-fires of the Osceola are kindled to light our way through the wilderness. The night-journey becomes an astonishment, a revelation, an Apocalypse.

Under the factitious illumination the banks, the roots, the stems, the creepers, the burdened boughs, the waving mosses, turn white as dead silver against the background of black sky; it is a Doresque landscape, abnormally fantastic and wan. Close to shore the relief is weirdly sharp; beyond, the heights of swamp forest rise dim and gray into the night, like shapes of vapor. There are no greens visible under this unearthly radiance; all is frosty-white or phantom gray; we seem to voyage not through a living forest, but through a world of ghosts. Forms grotesque as fetishes loom up on all sides; the cypresses in their tatters throng whitely to the black

flood, as Shades to the Styx. And panoramas begin to unroll themselves, monstrous as witchcraft; there are mockeries of gibbets; there are processions in cerements; there are phantasmal Crucifixions.

New groves of palm pass by, — all gray as death; still beautiful they are, but with a sinister beauty; their crests seem horrent with menace; their stems appear to writhe in the spectral light; and they are oddly tall. 'How high?' I asked the grizzled captain of the Osceola. 'I have seen them seventy-five feet,' he answered. But in that illusive light they seem far loftier, — terrifically tall, — preternaturally heightened as in a dream. And their physiognomy has wholly changed; their phantasmal beauty no longer holds a suggestion of hallowed attributes, of luminous poetry, of the mythical cosmogonic and anthropogonic Tree; but it recalls the memory of the strangest of all legends regarding the origin of the palm, — the old Greek story that strong Herakles, descending into hell, first

uprooted it from the plutonian soil, and transported the infernal growth to the regions of life and light.

And the forest, ever weirder and higher, opens itself before us in tremendous vistas, in awful succession of surprises, — each more startling than the last, — as though seeking to terrify, as though resolved to frighten man away from its solitudes. We move in silence; few speak; no one laughs: the necromancy of the woods hangs upon us like a spell. And there comes a cold, such a cold as might precede the advent of an apparition, — the chill of heavy dews distilled in the atmosphere of morasses, — a death-sweat of foliage strangling in the embrace of oxygen-devouring plants. Even the frogs have ceased to call.

Suddenly the darkness shrieks! — a scream of anguish, long and frightful, and thrice repeated, rises from the woods. 'Only a bird,' the captain says. Is there, indeed, a bird in the world that can utter so hideous a cry? Again and again it rends

the night, while the woods ever display new terrors, new extravaganzas of ghastliness. As a traveler belated, who sings loudly in the darkness to give himself courage, the Osceola opens her iron throat, and shouts with all her voice of steam. And the deep forest laughs in scorn, and hurls back the shout with a thousand mockeries of echo, — a thousand phantom thunders; and the bitter triple cry of anguish follows us still over the sable flood.

But the Fountain of Youth is not now far away; midnight is past; the trees lock arms overhead; and we glide through the Cypress Gates.

Lulled by the monotonous throbbing of the machinery, — the systole and diastole of the steamer's heart, — I sank to sleep and dreamed; but the spectra of the woods filled all my dreams. It seemed to me that I was floating, — lying as in a canoe, and all alone, — down some dark and noiseless current, — between forests endless and

vast, — under an unearthly light. White mosses drooped to sweep my face; phantoms of cypress put forth long hands to seize. Again I saw the writhing and the nodding of the palms: they elongated their bodies like serpents; they undulated quiveringly, as cobras before the snake-charmer. And all the moss-hung shapes of fear took life, and moved like living things, — slowly and monstrously, as polyps move. Then the vision changed and magnified; the river broadened Amazonianly; the forests became colossal, — preternatural, — world-shadowing at last, — meeting even over the miles of waters; and the sabals towered to the stars. And still I drifted with the mighty stream, feeling less than an insect in those ever-growing enormities; and a thin Voice like a wind came weirdly questioning: '*Ho! thou dreamer of dreams! — hast ever dreamed aught like unto this? — This is the Architecture of God!*'

May 6, 188–

How divine the coming of the morning, — the coming of the Sun, — exorcising the shadowy terrors of the night with infinite restoration of color! I look upon the woods, and they are not the same: the palms have vanished; the cypresses have fled away; trees young and comely and brightly green replace them. A hand is laid upon my shoulder, — the hand of the gray Captain: 'Go forward, and see what you have never seen before.' Even as he speaks, our boat, turning sharply, steams out of the green water into — what can I call it? — a flood of fluid crystal, — a river of molten diamond, — a current of liquid light?

'It will be like this for eight miles,' observed the Captain. Eight miles! — eight miles of magic, — eight miles of glory! O the unspeakable beauty of it! It might be fifty feet in depth at times; yet every pebble, every vein of the water-grass blades, every atom of sparkling sand, is clearly

visible as though viewed through sun-filled air; and but for the iridescent myriads of darting fish, the scintillations of jewel-color, we might well fancy our vessel floating low in air, like a balloon whose buoyancy is feeble. Water-grasses and slippery moss carpet much of the channel with a dark verdure that absorbs the light; the fish and the tortoises seem to avoid those sandy reaches left naked to the sun, as if fearful the great radiance would betray them, or as though unable to endure the force of the beams descending undimmed through all the translucent fathoms of the stream. It has no mystery this laughing torrent, save the mystery of its subterranean birth; it doffs all veils of shadow; the woods gradually withdraw from its banks; and the fires of the Southern sun affect not the delicious frigidity of its waves. Almost irresistible its fascination to the swimmer; one envies the fishes that shoot by like flashes of opal, even the reptiles that flee before the prow; a promise of strange joy,

of electrical caress, seems to smile from those luminous deeps, — like the witchery of a Naiad, the blandishment of an Undine.

And so we float at last into a great basin, dark with the darkness of profundities unfathomed by the sun; — the secret sources of the spring, the place of its mystic fountain-birth, and the end of our pilgrimage. Down, down, deep, there is a mighty quivering visible; but the surface remains unmoved; the giant gush expends its strength far beneath us. From what unilluminated caverns, — what subterranean lakes, — burst this prodigious flow? Go ask the gnomes! Man may never answer. This is the visible beginning indeed; but of the invisible beginning who may speak? — not even the eye of the Sun hath discerned it; the light of the universe hath never shone upon it. — Earth reveals much to the magicians of science; but the dim secret of her abysses she keeps forever.

A TROPICAL INTERMEZZO

The broken memory of a tale told in the last hours of a summer's night to the old Mexican priest by a dying wanderer from the Spanish Americas. Much the father marvelled at the quaintness of the accent of the man, which was the quaintness of dead centuries. . . .

Now the land of which I tell thee is a low land, where all things seem to have remained unchanged since the beginning of the world, — a winterless land where winds are warm and weak, so that the leaves are not moved by them, — a beshadowed land that ever seemeth to mourn with a great mourning. For it is one mighty wold, and the trees there be all hung with drooping plants and drooling vines, and dribbling mossy things that pend queerly from the uppermost branchings even to the crankling roots. And there be birds in that wold which do sing only when the moon shineth full, — and they have voices, like to monks, — and measured

is their singing, and solemn, and of vasty sound, — and they are not at all afraid. But when the sun shineth there prevaileth such quiet as if some mighty witchcraft weighed upon the place; and all things drowse in the great green silence.

Now on the night of which I tell thee, we had camped there; and it seemed to me that we might in sooth have voyaged beyond the boundaries of the world; for even the heavens were changed above us, and the stars were not the same; and I could not sleep for thinking of the strangeness of the land and of the sky. And about the third watch I rose and went out under those stars, and looked at them, and listened to the psalmody of the wonderful birds chanting in the night like friars. Then a curious desire to wander alone into the deep woods came upon me. — *En chica hora Dios obra!* — In that time I feared neither man nor devil; and our commander held me the most desperate in that desperate band; and I strode out of the camp

without thought of peril. The grizzled sentry desired to question me; — I cursed him and passed on.

And I was far away from the camp when the night grew pale, and the fire of the great strange Cross of stars, about which I have told thee, faded out, and I watched the edge of the East glow ruddy and ruddier with the redness of iron in a smithy; until the sun rose up, yellow like an orange is, with palm-leaves sharply limned against his face. Then I heard the Spanish trumpets sounding their call through the morning; but I did not desire to return. Whether it was the perfume of the flowers, or the odors of unknown spice-trees or some enchantment in the air, I could not tell thee; but I do remember that, as I wandered on, a sudden resolve came to me never to rejoin those comrades of mine. And a stranger feeling grew upon me like a weakness of heart, — like a great sorrow for I knew not what; and the fierceness of the life that I had lived passed away from

me, and I was even as one about to weep. Wild doves whirred down from the trees to perch on my casque and armored shoulders; and I wondered that they suffered me to touch them with my hands, and were in no wise afraid.

So day broadened and brightened above me; and it came to pass that I found myself following a path where the trunks of prodigious trees filed away like lines of pillars, reaching out of sight, — and their branches made groinings like work of arches above me, so that it was like a monstrous church; and the air was heavy with a perfume like incense. All about me blazed those birds which are not bigger than bees, but do seem to have been made by God out of all manner of jewels and colored fire; also there were apes in multitude, and reptiles beyond reckoning, and singing insects, and talking birds. Then I asked myself whether I were not in one of those lands old Moors in Spain told of, — lands near the sinking of the sun, where

fountains of magical water are. And fancy begetting fancy, it came to pass that I found me dreaming of that which Juan Ponce de Leon sought.

Thus dreaming as I went on, it appeared to me that the green dimnesses deepened, and the forest became loftier. And the trees now looked older than the deluge; and the stems of the things that coiled and climbed about them were enormous and gray; and the tatters of the pendent mosses were blanched as with the hoariness of ages beyond reckoning. Again I heard the trumpet sounding, — but so far off that the echo was not louder than the droning of the great flies; and I was gladdened by the fancy that it would soon have no power to reach mine ears.

And all suddenly I found myself within a vast clear space, — ringed about by palms so lofty that their tops appeared to touch the sky, and their shadows darkened all within the circle of them. And there was a great silence awhile, broken only by

the whispering of waters. My feet made no sound, so thick was the moss I trod upon; and from the circle of the palms on every side the ground sloped down to a great basin of shimmering water. So clear it was that I could perceive sparkles of gold in the sands below; and the water seemed forced upward in a mighty underflow from the centre of the basin, where there was a deep, dark place. And into the bright basin there trickled streamlets also from beneath the roots of the immense trees; and I became aware of a great subterrene murmuring, as if those waters — which are beneath the earth — were all seeking to burst their way up to the sun.

Then, being foredone with heat and weariness, I doffed my armor and my apparel and plunged into the pool of the fountain. And I discovered that the brightness of the water had deluded me; for so deep was it that by diving I could not reach the bottom. Neither was the fountain tepid as are the slow river cur-

rents of that strange land, but of a pleasant frigidness, — like those waters that leap among the rocks of Castile. And I felt a new strength and a puissant joy, as one having long traveled with burning feet through some fevered and fiery land feeleth new life when the freshness of sea-winds striketh against his face, and the jocund brawling of the great billows smiteth his ears through the silence of desolation. And the joyousness I knew as a boy seemed to flame through all my blood again, — so that I sported in the luminous ripples and laughed aloud, and uttered shouts of glee; and high above me in the ancient trees wonderful birds mocked my shoutings and answered my laughter hoarsely, as with human voices. And when I provoked them further, they did imitate my speech till it seemed that a thousand echoes repeated me. And, having left the fount, no hunger nor weariness weighed upon me,—but I yielded unto a feeling of delicious drowsihead, and laid me down

upon the moss to sleep as deeply as an infant sleepeth.

Now, when I opened mine eyes again, I wondered greatly to behold a woman bending over me, — and presently I wondered even much more, for never until then had it been given me to look upon aught so comely. Begirdled with flowers she was, but all ungarmented, — and lithe to see as the rib of a palmleaf is, — and so aureate of color that she seemed as one created of living gold. And her hair was long and sable as wing-feathers of ravens are, with shifting gleams of blue, — and was interwoven with curious white blossoms. And her eyes, for color like to her hair, I could never describe for thee, — that large they were, and limpid, and lustrous, and sweet-lidded! So gracious her stature and so wonderful the lissomeness of her, that, for the first time, I verily knew fear, — deeming it never possible that earthly being might be so goodly to the sight. Nor did the awe that was upon me pass away until

I had seen her smile, — having dared to speak to her in my own tongue, which she understood not at all. But when I had made certain signs she brought me fruits fragrant and golden as her own skin; and as she bent over me again our lips met, and with the strange joy of it I felt even as one about to die, — for her mouth was —

['Nay, my son,' said the priest, preventing him, 'dwell not upon such things. Already the hand of death is on thee; waste not these priceless moments in speech of vanity, — rather confess thee speedily that I may absolve thee from thy grievous sin.']

So be it, *padre mio*, I will speak to thee only of that which a confessor should know. But I may surely tell thee those were the happiest of my years; for in that low dim land even Earth and Heaven seemed to kiss; and never did other mortal feel the joy I knew of, love that wearies never and youth that passeth never away.

Verily, it was the Eden-garden, the Paradise of Eve. Fruits succulent and perfume were our food, — the moss, springy and ever cool, formed our bed, made odorous with flowers; and for night-lamps we prisoned those wondrous flies that sparkle through darkness like falling stars. Never a cloud or tempest, — no fierce rain nor parching heat, but spring everlasting, filled with scent of undying flowers, and perpetual laughter of waters, and piping of silver-throated birds. Rarely did we wander far from that murmuring hollow. My cuirass, and casque, and good sword of Seville, I allowed to rust away; my garments fell into dust; but neither weapon nor garment were needed where all was drowsy joy and unchanging warmth. Once she whispered to me in my own tongue, which she had learned with marvelous ease, though I, indeed, never could acquire hers: 'Dost know, *Querido mio*, here one may never grow old?' Then only I spake to her about that fountain which Juan

Ponce de Leon sought, and told her the marvels related of it, and questioned her curiously about it. But she smiled, and pressed her pliant golden fingers upon my lips, and would not suffer me to ask more, — neither could I at any time after find heart to beseech her further regarding matters she was not fain to converse of.

Yet ever and anon she bade me well beware that I should not trust myself to stray alone into the deep dimness beyond the dale of the fountains: '*Lest the Shadows lay hold upon thee*,' she said. And I laughed low at her words, never discerning that the Shadows whereof she spake were those that Age and Death cast athwart the sunshine of the world.

['Nay, nay, my son,' again spoke the priest; 'tell me not of Shadows, but of thy great sins only; for the night waneth, and thine hour is not far off.']

Be not fearful, father; I may not die before I have told thee all. . . . I have spo-

ken of our happiness; now must I tell thee of our torment — the strangest thing of all? Dost remember what I related to thee about the sound of the trumpet summoning me? Now was it not a ghostly thing that I should hear every midnight that same summons, — not faintly as before, but loud and long — once? Night after night, ever at the same hour, and ever with the same sonority, even when lying in her arms, I heard it — as a voice of brass, rolling through the world. And whensoever that cursed sound came to us, she trembled in the darkness, and linked her arms more tightly about me, and wept, and would not be comforted till I had many times promised that I should not forsake her. And through all those years I heard that trumpet-call — years, said I? — nay, *centuries* (since in that place there is not any time nor any age) — I heard it through long centuries after all my comrades had been laid within their graves.

[And the stranger gazed with strange inquiry into the priest's face; but he crossed himself silently, and spoke no word.]

And nightly I strove to shut out the sound from my ears and could not; and nightly the torment of hearing it ever increased like a torment of hell — *ay de mi!* nightly, for uncounted generations of years! So that in time a great fury would seize me whenever the cursed echoes came; and, one dark hour, when she seemed to hear it not, and slept deeply, I sought my rusted blade, and betook me toward the sound, — beyond the dale of fountains — into the further dimness of swaying mosses, — whither, meseems, the low land trendeth southward and toward those wan wastes which are not land nor water, yet which do quake to a great and constant roaring as of waves in wrath.

[A moment the voice of the aged man failed him, and his frame quivered as in the beginning of agony.]

Now I feel, padre, that but little time is allotted me to speak. I may never recount to thee my wanderings, and they, indeed, are of small moment. — Enough to tell thee that I never again could find the path to the fountains and to her, so that she became lost to me. And when I found myself again among men, lo! the whole world was changed, and the Spaniards I met spake not the tongue of my time, and they mocked the quaintness of my ways and jibed at the fashion of my speech. And my tale I dared tell to none, through fear of being confined with madmen, save to thee alone, and for this purpose only I summoned thee. Surely had I lived much in this new age of thine men must have deemed me bereft of reason, seeing that my words and ways were not like unto theirs; but I have passed my years in the morasses of unknown tropics, with the python and the cayman, —and in the dark remoteness of forests inhabited by monstrous things, — and in forgotten ruins of

dead Indian cities, — and by shores of strange rivers that have no names, — until my hair whitened and my limbs were withered and my great strength was utterly spent in looking for her.

'Verily, my son,' spake the confessor, 'any save a priest might well deem thee mad, — though thy speech and thy story be not of to-day. Yet I do believe thy tale. Awesome it is and strange; but the traditions of the Holy Church contain things that are not less strange: witness the legend of the Blessed Seven of Ephesus, whose lives were three hundred and sixty years preserved that the heresy concerning the resurrection of the flesh might be confounded forever. Even in some such way hath the Lord preserved thee through the centuries for this thine hour of repentance. Commend, therefore, thy soul to God, repentingly, and banish utterly from thee that evil spirit who still tempts thee in the semblance of woman.'

'Repent!' wonderingly spake the wanderer, whose great black eyes flamed up again as with the fires of his youth; 'I do not repent, I shall never repent, — nor did I summon thee hither that thou shouldst seek to stir me to any repentance. — Nay! more than mine own soul I love her,—unutterably, unswervingly, everlastingly! Aye! greater a thousand fold is my love of her than is thy hope of heaven, thy dread of death, thy fear of hell. — Repent! — beyond all time shall I love her, through eternity of eternities, — aye! as thou wouldst say, even *por los siglos de los siglos.*'

Kneeling devoutly, the confessor covered his face with his hands, and prayed even as he had never prayed before. When he lifted his eyes again, lo! the soul had passed away unshriven; — but there was such a smile upon the dead face that the priest marveled, and murmured, with his lips: '*Surely he hath found Her at last!*' —

A TROPICAL INTERMEZZO

Faintly, with the coming of the dawn, a warm south wind moved the curtains, and bare into the chamber rich scent of magnolia and of jessamine and of those fair blossoms whose odor evoketh beloved memory of long-dead bridal-mornings, — until it seemed that a weird sweet Presence invisible had entered, all silently, and stood there even as a Watcher standeth. And all the East brightened; — and, touched by the yellow magic of the sun, the vapors above the place of his rising formed themselves into a Fountain of Gold.

A NAME IN THE PLAZA

June 3, 18—

SOMETIMES, in that Gloaming that divides deep sleep from the awakening, — when out of the world of wavering memories the first thin fancies begin to soar, like neuroptera, rising on diaphanous wing from a waste of marsh-grasses, — there suddenly comes an old, old longing that stings thought into nervous activity with a sharp pain. The impression in the first moment of wakefulness might be likened to a sense of nostalgia, — but the nostalgia which is rather a world-sickness than a homesickness; there is something in it also resembling the vain regret for what has been left perhaps twenty-years' journey behind us, and has now become a tropical remembrance because we have traveled so far toward the Northern Circle of life. Yet the longing I refer to is more puissant and more subtle than these definable feelings

are; — it has almost the force of an impulse; it has no real affinity with the recognizable Past; its visions are archipelagoes which never loomed for us over the heaving of any remembered seas; it is like an unutterable wish to flee away from the Present into the Unknown, — a beautiful unknown, radiant with impossible luminosities of azure and sun-gold! I do not know how to account for this impulse, — unless as an unexplained Something in Man corresponding to the instinct of migration in lower forms of life — especially in those happy winged creatures privileged to follow the perfumed Summer round about the world. And I think it comes to us usually either with the first lukewarm burst of spring, or with the windy glories of autumn. Nevertheless, in the morning it came, out of season, and remained with me, while I watched from the balcony birds and ships alike fleeting tropicward with many-colored wings outspread, and thought of a tame crane at home, — with

one wing hopelessly maimed, — that used to cry out bitterly to processions of his wild kindred sailing above the city roofs on their way to other skies.

Why these longings for lands in which we shall never be? — why this desire for that azure into which we cannot soar? — whence our mysterious love for that tumultuous deep into whose emerald secrets we may never peer? — Can it be that through countless epochs of the immemorial phylogenesis of man, — through all those myriad changes suggested by the prenatal evolution of the human heart, — through all the slow marvelous transition from fish to mammal, — there have actually persisted impulses, desires, sensations, whereof the enigma may be fully interpreted by some new science only, — a future science of psychical dysteleology? . . .

So musing, I found my way to the Plaza.

Has it not often seemed to you that the more antiquated and the more unfamiliar

an object or a place is, the more it appears at first sight to live, — to possess a sort of inner being, a fetish-spirit, a soul? I thought that morning the ancient Plaza had such a soul, and that it spoke to me in its mysterious dumb way, as if saying: 'Come look at me, because I am very, very old; — but do not look at the sulphur fountain which the Americans have made, nor at the monument they have built; for those are not of the centuries to which I belong.'

So I entered, and idled awhile among the palms that threw spidery shadows under the noon-light; and I deciphered the old inscription upon the coquina pillar: — 'PLAZA DE LA CONSTITUCION . . . ;' — paying little heed to the song of the artesian spring, and scarcely vouchsafing a furtive glance to the newer monument, which I saw was not artistic, not imposing, but naïve and almost cumbrous. Suddenly my indifferent eye noted a graven word which revealed that the newer structure

had been erected by Love, and for Love's sake only. And then, all unexpectedly, the very artlessness of the monument touched me as with a voiceless reproach, — touched me like the artlessness of a face in tears: so much of tender pain revealed itself through the simplicity of the chiseled words, OUR DEAD, — through the commonplaceness of the inscription, '*Erected by the Ladies' Memorial Association.*' Then I walked around the monument, perusing on each of its white faces the roll-call of the dead, — sons, brothers, lovers, — the names of your darlings, gentle women of Saint Augustine! I read them every one; carefully spelling out many a Spanish name of Andalusian origin: sonorous appellations holding in their syllables etymological suggestions of Arabian ancestry — names swarthy and beautiful as an Oriental face might be. And all the while, — dominating the perfume of blossoms, and the keen sweet scent of aromatic grasses, — the sulphureous smell of the

volcanic spring came to me grimly through the warm aureate air, — like an odor of battles!

There was a name upon that white stone which affected me in a singular way, — a name that by contrast with those dark Spanish ones seemed fair, blonde as gold! In some place — at some time, I had known that name. — But where? — but when?

Even as a perfume may create for us the spectre of a vanished day, or as a melody may suddenly evoke for us the forgotten tone of some dear voice, — so may the sound or sight of a name momentarily revive for us all the faded colors of some memory-portrait so beautiful, so beloved, that we had become afraid to look at it, and had permitted innumerable spiders of Monotony to weave their tintless gauze before its face. But we have had experiences which are now so long dead and so profoundly sepultured in the Cemetery of Recollection that no mnemonic necro-

mancy can lend them recognizable outline; they have become totally spiritualized, and reveal themselves only as faint wind-stirrings in the atmosphere of Thought.

Surely the experience connected in some vague way with that blonde name must have belonged to these: — the memory *had* been; for I knew the presence of its ghost; but viewless it obstinately remained.

It pursued me through the amber afternoon. By some inexplicable mental process I discovered that it had been also associated with an idea of death, a melancholy fancy, at the time, that I had heard or had seen it before. — But when? — but where did I first learn that name? . . . Night came, but brought with it no answer to the enigma.

I watched the moon, — a new moon, yellow and curved like a young banana, — droop over the dreaming sea: there were sparklings like effervescence through the

archway of stars,—perhaps the molecular motion of some Astral Thought. Then seemed to fall upon the world a hush like the hush of sanctuaries,—like that *Silence of Secrets* told of in the Bhagavad-Gita: the peace of the Immensities. In such hours fancies come to us like gusts of seawind,— as vast and pure; nay, sometimes vaster, — measureless like the interspaces between sun and sun. For it is only in these voiceless moments that the heavens speak to us, — telling of mysteries beyond the luminous signaling of astral deep unto astral deep, beyond the furthest burning of constellations; mysteries that shall still be mysteries when our day-star shall have yielded up his ghost of flame. —The death of a man; the death of a sun: — is the awful Universe affected any more by the last than by the first?

And with this question, the question of the morning returned, enigmatic as before, — bringing to me the indescribable, creeping, electrical sensation that we are said to

feel especially when some heedless foot is treading the place of our future grave.

It was late when I sought sleep that night — my last Floridian night.

And I dreamed strange dreams.

First, I dreamed of a plant, — a plant with sombre cordiform leaves, — that *bent away from the light toward me*, and followed me persistently when I retreated from it; crawling like a pet reptile to get in front of me, and then rising up slowly, very slowly; stretching out to me, as with dumb affection, two helpless arms — two long leafy stems tipped with blood-colored flowers.

Then it seemed to me that I stood in a place of burial, and that, in some inexplicable way, I could observe the processes of that dark alchemy by which flesh is transmuted into leaf and fruit, — by which blood is transformed into blossom, as in the old Greek myths, and into the living substance also of those creatures, gem-winged, jewel-eyed, that feed upon the juices, the

honey, and the fruit of graveyard flora. Then suddenly the mystery of the blonde name again came before me — this time upon a graven square of marble; and in a little while I thought I knew the story of the dead; for this impossible and nameless legend shaped itself in my sleep.

VULTUR AURA

June 2, 188–

. . . *San Juan de los Pinos:* — 'Saint John of the Pines.' That was the name of the ancient fort. And in those days the names of the bastions also were names of the Evangelists and the Apostles.

There is a ghostliness in the name! Why Saint John *of the pines?* Was this low shore beshadowed in the sixteenth century by pines tremendous, immemorial, more ancient than man, — through whose colossal aisles the sea-gusts spake with utterance vague and vast as the Wind of the Spirit? Did the roar of the far-off reef, the mutterings of the mighty woods, evoke for Spanish piety dim fancies of the Voices of Patmos, of the Thunders and the Trumpetings?

It was a timber stronghold only, — that forgotten fort, thus placed beneath the

protection of weird Saint John, — a rampart-work of pine. Then were discovered the virtues of the coquina, — that wonderful shell-rock which seems marble half formed, half crystallized, under the pressure of shallow seas; and out of it was Fort San Marco built, — very solidly, very mathematically, very slowly, — by the labor of more than a century and the expenditure of thirty millions of good Spanish dollars. Two hundred and fifty years ago theybegan to build it; to-day it stands well-nigh as strong as in the time when Oglethorpe's English cannon played on it in vain. Now the profane Americano, who putteth no trust in saints, but in his own strength only, calleth it Fort Marion; and the lizards dwell in it; and the spider weaves her tapestries above its chapel-altar; and the dust is deep in the holy-water fonts, where Catholic swordsmen once dipped their sinewy hands. But over the great sally-port you may still discern the Arms of Spain, — the Crown, the

Shield, the triple turrets of Castile, the rampant Lions of Leon, and, encircling these, the sculptured Order of the Fleece of Gold. Salty winds have chapped the relief; — the fingers of the rain have worn it down as the smooth face of a coin is worn; — the wings of Time have brushed away the edges of the tablet, — and besmirched the Fleece of Gold, — and obliterated, as in irony, the title of the King, and the beginning of the solemn inscription, — REY-NANDO EN ESPAÑA. The REY is gone forever! — syllable and potentate! Underneath the pendant Lamb, — now black, — there are dark stains of drippings, — as of blood streaming over the stone. Nothing could be more grotesquely realistic than the sculptured helplessness of that Lamb; yet we may well doubt if he who chiseled it was moved by any spirit of sardonic symbolism, — any memory of those Argonauts of the sixteenth century, who found a new Colchis in the West, and a new Fleece, whereof the shearing yielded in less

than one generation three hundred tons of gold.

Now the moat is haunted by lizards and lovers only; and there are buzzards upon the sentry towers; and there are bats in the barbican: — it is just sixty-five years since the last Spanish trooper tramped out of the sally-port, never to come back. But squamated as the structure is, the dignity of it imposes awe, — the antiquated vastness of it compels respect for the vanished grandeur of Spain; the majesty of its desolation is unspeakable. — I think one feels it most on wild days, when the mighty drum-roll of the breakers is sounded from the harbor bar, and the winds of the Atlantic blow their mad clarions in the barbican, and all the white cavalry of Ocean charge the long coral coast.

. . . A Shadow descends the counterscarp of the sea-battery, — passes the covered way, — crosses the ditch, — mounts

the scarp, — vanishes beyond the bastions. A moment more and it reappears, — still coming from the sea; it is moving in circles with a swift swimming motion, as of an opaqueness floating vaguely in the humors of the eye. Now it is only a passing fleck, a shapeless blot; now it is the phantom of a boat.

Look up, into the brightness, — into the violet blaze! — behold him hovering in the splendor of heaven, sailing before the sun, that Kharkas, 'dwelling in decay,' — whom the Parsee reveres. (For 't is written that even the flitting of his shadow over the faces of the dead driveth out the unclean spirit that entereth into corpses.) 'From the height of his highest flight he discerneth if there be upon the ground a morsel of flesh not bigger than a hand; and for his comfort the odor of musk hath been created underneath his wing.' — How magnificent his soaring! — yet the vast pinions never beat; they veer only with his wheeling, — sometimes presenting to the meridian their

whole black banner-breadth,—sometimes offering only the sabre-curves of their edges. He seems to float by volition alone, — to swim the deeps of day without effort. Higher and higher he mounts into the abyss of light; now he seems to hang beside the sun! — now he is only a whirling speck! — now he is gone! — My field-glass brings him again into view for a moment — sailing, circling, spiring by turns; but once more he dwindles into a mote, not bigger than a tiny flake of soot, which rises up, up, up, and vanishes away at last into luminous eternities unfathomable. Yet from those invisible heights his eye still scans the face of the land and the features of men—that wondrous eye far reaching as a beam of daylight. 'There is a path,' saith Job, 'which no fowl knoweth, *and which the eye of the vulture hath not seen.*' — But that path lies not open to the gaze of the sun; for whatsoever earthly thing the day-star hath looked upon, that thing the ken of the vulture also hath discerned.

Rightly, therefore, hath the eye of the vulture been mythologically likened unto the eye of deities and of demons. Was not the sacred symbol of Isis, the Impenetrably Veiled, — Isis, mother of Gods, 'Eye of the Sun,' who by the quivering of her feathers createth light, who by the beating of her wings createth spirit, — a Golden Vulture, the saving emblem hung about the throat of the dead? And the vultures of the Vedic prayer to Indra, all-seeing demons; great sun-vultures of the Sanscrit epic, demi-gods. By vision alone it was given the bird Gatayus to know the past, the present, and that which was to come; for, encompassing the world in his flight, all things were discerned by his gaze.

O ghoul of the empyrean, well doth thy brother, the Shadow-caster of deserts, know the time of the going and the coming of the caravans; and he maketh likewise each year the pilgrimage to the tomb of the

Prophet! — Thy cousins sit upon the Towers of Silence; and the charnel-pits of the dakhmas have no secrets for them! From the eternal silences of heaven, — from the heights that are echoless and never reached by human cry, — progenitors of thine have watched the faces of the continents wrinkle in the revolution of centuries; they have looked down upon the migrations of races; they have witnessed the growth and the extinction of nations; they have read the crimson history of a hundred thousand wars.

Another shadow crosses my feet — and yet another passes; the orbits of their circlings intercross. Hanging above the dark fort, those black silhouettes cutting sharply athwart the azure seem grimly appropriate to this desolation. Doubtless the birds have haunted the coast for centuries. The Spaniard, who gave many a rich feast of eyes and hearts, has passed away; — the Vulture remains, and waits. For what? — is it for some vomit of the spuming sea, —

some putrefaction of the buzzing shambles? — or does he, indeed, still hope, even after the passing of three hundred years, *for the return of Menendez?*

CREOLE PAPERS

QUAINT NEW ORLEANS AND ITS HABITANTS

I. FRENCH-TOWN

Old New Orleans proper (French-Town, as it is termed by steamboatmen; Le Carré, as its own inhabitants call it) is principally, though not wholly, comprised in the great quadrilateral bounded by Canal, Esplanade, Rampart, and Old Levee streets. Where the horse-cars now run upon those thoroughfares formerly stood the bastioned walls of the colonial city, encircled by a deep moat. Double rows of trees now mark the old rampart lines upon three sides of the quadrilateral, and birds sing in their branches at just the height where brazen cannon once showed their black throats, where Swiss or Spanish sentries paced to and fro against the sky. Within the Carré the streets are serried, solid, and picturesque. Memories of aris-

tocratic wealth still endure in certain vast mansions, broad-balconied and deep-courted, now mostly converted into hotels or lodging-houses, half the year void of guests; but the majority of the dwellings are rather curious than splendid. Nearly all the larger ones are built in the form of an L, the lower line of the letter representing the street front, the upper line a shallow but lofty wing reaching far back from the main building at right angles, and flanked by an enormous green or brown cistern as by a round tower. A really imposing archway often pierces the street façade — giving carriageway into the deep court — much like those quaint archways characteristic of old London taverns. Such a building often possesses three sets of stairways — invariably two — one for the main edifice, one for the wing. But these immense winter residences, once sheltering a population of servants and clients large as that comprised in the Roman *familia*, are now for the most part in a

state of decay. There is much crumbling of wood-work, looseness of jointing, ulcerous exposure of the brick skeleton where plaster has rotted away in patches from piazza pillars and from the ribs of archways. Grass struggles up between the flagging; microscopic fungi patch the wall surfaces with sickly green. The semi-tropical forces of nature in the South are mighty to destroy the work of man. Dismally romantic is the Greek front upon Toulouse Street, in rear of the old Hôtel Saint Louis, and once famous as 'The Planters' Bank.' Through cracks in the high board fence erected about its desolation one may see the weeds squeezing their way through the joints of its broad stone steps, the green creepers wriggling round its columns, and bushes actually growing from the angles of its pediment — a vegetation planted, doubtless, by birds. This ruin has a veritable classic dignity — a melancholy that is antique. Sorrowful likewise are the voiceless courts of the once

beautiful French hotel, with their void galleries above and dried-up fountains below. Millions upon millions have changed hands within that building; princely revels were held there of old by the feudal lords of Louisiana; the splendors of the past linger in the tarnished gilding and dying colors of the lofty apartments, and in the decorations of the porcelain dome frescoed by Casanova.

Many of the French and Spanish dwellings are as full of architectural mysteries and surprises as the Castle of Otranto — corridors that serpentine, stairways that leap from building to building, cabinets masked in the recesses of dormer-windows, curious covered bridges worthy of Venice. Looking up or down one of these streets, the eye is astonished by the long patchwork of colors motley as Joseph's coat, ultimately fading off into grayish-blues where the vista meets the horizon. Under the golden glow of the sun these tints take delightful warmth; there are chrome and

gamboge yellows, deep-sea greens, ashen pinks, brick reds, chocolates, azures, blazing whites, all trimmed with the intenser green of iron balconies and the antiquated window-shutters folded back against the wall. The old French Opera-house I have seen painted in a peculiarly pleasing hue, to which a summer sun would lend the mellowness of antique marble. It was a ripe-ivorine tint, with just the faintest conceivable flush of pink; it was a warm and human color—it was the color of creole flesh!

Speaking of it recalls the curious statement of divers writers to the effect that the skin of the West Indian creole feels cooler than that of a European or American from the Northern States. The same is true of the Louisiana creole; the vigorous European or Northerner who touches a creole hand during the burning hours of a July or August day has reason to be surprised at its coolness — such a coolness as tropical fruits retain even under the perpendicular fires of an equatorial sun.

DIARY OF AN IMPRESSIONIST

II. THE CREOLES

When an educated resident of New Orleans speaks of the creoles he must be understood as referring to the descendants of the early Latin colonists, the posterity of those French and Spanish settlers who founded or ruled Louisiana. The diminutive *criollo*, derived from the Spanish *criar*, 'to beget,' primarily signified the colonial-born child of European blood, as distinguished from the offspring of the Conquistadores by slave women, whether Indian or African. Nothing could be more etymologically antithetical, therefore, than the phrase 'colored creoles,' although it has obtained considerable currency as a convenient term to distinguish those colored people who can claim a partly Latin origin, from the plainer 'American' colored folk who have neither French nor Spanish blood in their veins, and to whom the creole dialect is supremely unintelligible. Among the colored population of lighter tint,

moreover, the characteristics of the Latin blood show themselves so strongly that the popular use of the term distinguishing them from ordinary types of mulatto, quadroon, quinteroon, or octoroon appears justifiable.

What old Bryan Edwards, in his excellent but obsolete 'History of the British West Indies,' wrote concerning the creoles of the Antilles, largely applies to the creoles of Louisiana likewise, especially in relation to their physical characteristics. In whatever part of the civilized Temperate Zone pronounced, the very word 'creole' conveys to the hearer fancies tropical as the poetry of Baudelaire; to the imagination of well-informed readers the creole invariably appears as a person of European blood corporeally and morally modified by the influences of a torrid climate. Whether we hear of the English creoles of the West Indian, East Indian, or West African colonies, the French creoles of Algeria, Martinique, or Senegal, or the Dutch creoles of

Malabar, the name invariably provokes fancies of burning suns, of monstrous vegetation, of nights lighted by the Southern Cross. In New Orleans we are only at the Gate of the Tropics; sometimes our orange-trees shiver in frosty winds, our rare palms droop in January colds. But the climate is torrid enough nevertheless to have produced marked physical changes in the native white population of Louisiana during the lapse of generations. It has modified the osteogeny of the true creoles almost as remarkably as in Martinique or Trinidad; it has greatly deepened the eye-sockets to shelter the sight from the furnace glow of summer heat; it has made limbs suppler, extremities more delicate; and to these changes wrought in the body's framework is wholly attributable that languid and singular grace which distinguishes the *Louisianaise* among her fairer American sisters. Creole eyes — the eyes that tantalized Gottschalk into the musical utterances of *Ojos Criollos* — are large, lumin-

ous, liquidly black, deeply fringed, and their darkness is strangely augmented by the uncommon depth of the orbit. The pilose system — to use anatomical phraseology — is richly developed; the women have magnificent hair, and creole beards and mustaches are usually very handsome. Formerly the Louisiana creoles excelled in exercises demanding grace and quickness of eye; they were fine dancers and famous swordsmen — indeed, the art of fencing is not yet lost among them. The beauty of the women is peculiar; they possess a *sveltesse* — a slender elegance that is very fascinating; but to Northerners they seem fragile of physique, more delicate than they really are. A rosy face, a bright, fresh complexion, is rarely seen among them; they have an ivorine tint, a convalescent pallor, that contrasts oddly with the fire of their dark pupils and the lustrous blackness of their hair. When the tint is darker, — a Spanish swarthiness, — the effect is less strange. Creole blondes are few.

The creole temperament is one of great nervous sensibility; phlegmatic characters are anomalies; a disposition to violent extremes of anger or affection is often masked by an exterior appearance of listless indifference. The climate itself (nine months of summer heat, three of snowless chill, long periods of heavy calm, broken by storms of extraordinary and splendid violence — a climate enervating, fitful, luxuriant) has reflected its characteristics in the native population. The mind develops precociously, blossoms richly. There are few educated creoles who cannot speak two or three languages well; many speak more; and the writer has known one who was almost a Mezzofanti. Love of the mother-country is not dead among the creoles, and their attachment to ancient French customs has but little abated. Their home life has scarcely changed during a century, although they are becoming less socially exclusive. Nevertheless, the Northern stranger invited to visit the home

of a creole family may even now consider himself the subject of a rare compliment. Such a visit, however, will scarcely be made within the limits of the old colonial city, for the creoles are no longer there. They have moved away to newer districts north and south — away from the decaying streets and the crumbling cemeteries — out to quiet suburbs where the air is sweet with breath of jasmine flowers and orange-blossoms, out to dreamy Bayou Saint Jean, where clusters of white-pillared cottages slumber in green. They have mostly abandoned the Carré to the European Latins — French emigrants from the Mediterranean coasts, Italians, Sicilians, Spaniards, Greeks; to the population of the French Market, the venders of fruits and meats; to the keepers of what Sala called 'absurd little shops'; and especially to the French-speaking element of color, which still clings to the ruined Past with something of the strange affection that erst subsisted between master and slave.

How long will even that ruined Past endure? The somnolent quiet of the old streets is being already broken by the energetic bustle of American commerce; the Northern Thor is already threatening the picturesque town with iconoclastic hammer. Colossal capital advances menacingly from the southern side, showing the sheet-lightning of its gold. One huge firm has already devoured a whole square, and extended itself into four streets at once, cruciform-wise, like a Greek basilica. Even the old Napoleon First furniture sets, the massive four-pillared beds, the ponderous cabinets curiously carved, the luxuriant fauteuils, the triple-footed tables, — all these solid household gods which stood upon eagle feet of gilded brass, — are being bought up by shrewd speculators and sent North, to fetch prices which no one here would dream of paying. Perhaps the antique life will make its last rally about the old Place d'Armes (*Plaza de Armas*), in the vicinity of the quaint cathedral,

under the shadow of those towers whose bells for a hundred years have rung diurnally for the repose of the soul of *Don André Almonaster Roxas, Knight of the Royal and Distinguished Spanish Order of Charles III., Regidor and Alferez-Real of His Most Catholic Majesty.* So long as the iron tongues of those bells can speak, so long as the iron heart of the great tower-clock shall beat, something of the old life and the old faith must live in the creole quarter. Long after most of the quaint architecture shall have disappeared I fancy those two massive Spanish edifices, the old Cabildo and Casa Curial, will still remain standing upon either side of the cathedral, like grim soldiery guarding a commissary of the Holy Inquisition. The Spaniard builded well: after the lapse of nearly a hundred years, those rugged edifices testify grandly to the solid Roman character of their creators. The plaster may peel from the stout pillars of their arcades; but dilapidation only adds nobility to their

quaintness; they are dignified by the scars of their battle with Time; they are imposing without loftiness; they are superb without artifice — deep-shouldered, thick-set, broad-backed, firm upon their feet, like veteran troops, like the splendid Spanish infantry of three hundred years ago.

CREOLE WOMEN IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES

I

ALTHOUGH it is generally well known that the condition of woman in most Latin countries is one of comparative seclusion, — totally different from that existence of large freedom she enjoys in English or American communities, some romantic misconception prevails regarding her life in the Latin tropics. Fiction, painting, and poetry have combined to create a false ideal of that life, — to make the word 'creole' suggest many happy, dreamy, luminous things. Not altogether are the artists and romance-writers at fault, nevertheless: their purpose has been only to reflect something of nature's magic in the zones of eternal summer; and no art and no words could transcend the splendor that was their inspiration. He who has once

seen tropic nature under a tropic sun has received a revelation: there will come to him, if he has a heart, with a new strange meaning, — also eternal and true, — the words of John, — voiced perpetually from the purple peaks, and the undying woods, and sapphire glory of sea and sky: — '*This is the message which we announce unto you, that God is* LIGHT!'

Light! — no one dwelling in the cities of the North may ever imagine the possibilities of light and of color in the equatorial world. And he who has once known them must continue forever enchanted, —must feel, after departure from them, like an exile from Paradise. The poetry of the tropics is born of such regret. Romance and song are essentially imaginative; and that which surpasses and satiates imagination does not directly stimulate their production: it is only as an exile that the creole becomes a poet, when he remembers the charm of his country without the pains of its daily life. There is no more touching

incident, perhaps, in literary history, than the fate of Léonard, the poet of Guadeloupe. His youth had been mostly spent abroad in struggles to obtain the means of returning to his native island. Succeeding after intense strain, he returned to find himself only a victim of the revolution of 1789, — threatened with death if he persisted in remaining. His friends hurried him on board a vessel; but, although he had been already wounded and pursued by an assassin, he could not nerve himself to go. Again and again he left the ship, and only with the greatest difficulty could he be persuaded at last to remain on board. But nostalgia had brought him to the condition of a dying man before his arrival in France. At Nantes he tried to reëmbark, hoping at least to die in his beloved island; but he expired before the ship could sail.

Tropical nature is indeed an enchantress; but she does more than bewitch, she transforms body and soul. She satisfies

the senses, and numbs the aspirations; she lulls the higher faculties to sleep while gratifying, as nowhere else, the physical wants of life. It has been often said that human happiness has a certain fixed measure in all conditions of existence: the quality may vary, the capacity for each individual remains the same. Such a belief would seem to have its confirmation in the conditions of tropical society. The pleasures of intellectual life become almost impossible in a climate where the least mental effort provokes drowsiness, and the middle of each day is devoted to sleep; nor can the dazzling spectacle of tropical vegetation under tropical skies wholly compensate the enervating effect of an atmosphere hot and heavy as the air of a Turkish bath. Social existence, so circumstanced, becomes of necessity both indolent and provincial; and the enchantment of the tropics should prove irresistible only to strangers able and willing to dream life away, and to abandon all gifts of civilization

so hardly earned by Northern struggle. And one must know this, to guess how far from enviable is the life of white women even in the English tropics, where there is at least an effort to maintain the social customs of the mother country. But in the old Latin colonies of the Pacific and the West Indies, woman's life has always been narrowed by formal customs which no American or English girl could well resign herself to endure.

II

Time seems to have moved very slowly in the old French colonies. In the streets of Martinique or Réunion or Marie-Galante or Guadeloupe, one almost seems to live in the seventeenth century,—so little have architecture or customs been modified in two or three hundred years. The great changes effected by the abolition of slavery are not immediately discernible to a stranger; the free blacks and people of color, forming the mass of the population, still cling to the simple and bright attire of

other days, and seem to hold almost the same relation to white colonial life as hired servants that they formerly held as slaves. Emancipation, republicanism, and education have not yet abolished the old manners, nor greatly modified the creole speech. Could Josephine arise from the dust of her rest to revisit her Martinique birthplace, she would find so little changed at Trois-Islets, that except for the saucier manner of the younger negroes, she could scarcely surmise the new republican conditions. And the modern life of the creole woman, though less luxurious than in the previous century of colonial prosperity, varies otherwise little from that of her great-great-grandmother.

Her birth is announced with antique formality in the colonial papers, and duly registered in the *Archives de la Marine*. She is christened in the twilight of some colonial baptistery, where silhouettes of palm-heads quiver behind stained-glass windows; and receives those half-dozen

names — names of angels, or saints, alternated with names of ancestors — by which every white creole child is ushered into the world. Then some comely black or brown woman, dazzlingly robed in bright colors, and covered with barbaric jewelry, carries her on a silken cushion from house to house that all of family kin may kiss her. Always through the recollections of her childhood there will smile back to her the memory of that kind swart face, — the face of her black nurse, of her *da*. It is the *da* who bathes her, feeds her, dresses her, lulls her to sleep with song: doubtless for a time she believes the dark woman her mother. It is the *da* who first takes her out into the beautiful world of the tropics, — shows her the mighty azure circle of the sea, and the coming and going of the ships, and the peaks with their circling clouds, and the whispering gold of cane-fields, and the palms, and the jewel-feathered humming birds. It is the black nurse who first teaches her to kiss, — to utter the words

'*Manman*,' '*Da*,' '*Papoute*,' — to express her infant thoughts in the softest cooing speech uttered by human lips, — the creole tongue. It is the *da* also who first thrills her child-fancy into blossom with stories of the impossible, and who stimulates her musical sense by teaching her strange songs, — melodies borne with slavery into the Indies from Senegal or the Coast of Gold.

Growing older, the little one is gradually separated from her *da*, is taught to speak French, to submit to many formal restraints, is finally sent, — while still a mere child, — to some convent school. She leaves it only on arriving at womanhood. Perhaps during those years she sees her parents every regular visiting day, and during the brief Christmas vacations; but she is practically separated otherwise from them as much as if imprisoned, — though they may be living only a few streets away. If they are very rich, she may be sent away to France. In the latter event

she may acquire accomplishments superior to those imparted in any colonial convent; but the education in other respects is very simple and old-fashioned: the chief result aimed at in the training of girls being moral and religious rather than secular. The *pensionnaires* of the colonial convents wear a very plain uniform, — a straight-falling dress of sombre color, belted at the waist, and a broad straw hat. The different classes are distinguished by long narrow ribbons crossed over breast and back and tied round the waist below, the ends being left to stream down at one side. One class wears blue ribbons; another pink; another white. Altogether the uniform is ugly; it gives an aspect of clumsiness which is quite foreign to the creole race. Nothing could seem more uninteresting than a procession of convent girls on their way to church, escorted by nuns. But this is only the chrysalis stage of creole girl-life: the beautiful butterfly will be revealed when that sombre uniform is abandoned forever.

At seventeen or eighteen the creole girl returns home, with a large package of class prizes, — mostly publications of Mame & Cie, — showy volumes of a semi-religious character, — with a few books of travel, perhaps, added, which have been carefully perused and recommended as safe reading by some ecclesiastical censor. A private party is given in her honor; and she makes her *début* into creole society. Her life, thereafter, however, would not, by American girls at all events, be thought enviable. She rarely leaves home, except to pay a visit to some relatives, or to go to church under the escort of some member of the family, or some old lady chosen to accompany her. She is scarcely ever seen upon the streets. The pleasures of shopping are denied her. Whatever she needs is purchased for her by male relatives, or by her hired maid, — who selects at the store such merchandise as may be desired, and carries a stock of samples to the house, in a tray balanced upon her head. There the deci-

sion is made, the chosen articles retained, and the remainder carried back to the merchant, who in due time sends in his bill. There are no evening parties or visitings; the active life of the colony ends with sundown; all retire between eight and nine o'clock, and rise with dawn. Except during the brief theatrical season, and on the annual occasion of a carnival ball given by select society, there are no evening amusements. The discipline of the convent has prepared the young girl for this secluded existence; but were it not for the intense heat of the climate, she would probably suffer, in spite of such preparation, from the monotony of her life. Happily for her, she remains as innocent of other conditions of society as she is ignorant of all evil; and the tenderness of her mother or other relatives does all that can be done to render her existence happy. Still, she sometimes regrets her convent-days, — the liberty of play-hours in the open court, with its palms and *sabliers:* she likes to revisit the nuns

occasionally, to get a glimpse of the pupils amusing themselves as she used to do, — secretly wishes, perhaps, that she were a child again. But she has yet no idea how often she will wish that wish before they robe her all in black, and put her away to sleep forever somewhere in the colonial cemetery, under the tall palms.

All about her young life glimmer conventional bars: she is a caged bird, vaguely desiring liberty, without a suspicion of what perils liberty might bring. Her pleasures, her ideas, her emotions are still those of a child, — even on the day when her mother, kissing her, first whispers to her some news that makes her flush to her hair. She has been spoken for! A gentleman, whom she scarcely knows even as a visitor, has demanded her hand. Could she love him? She does not know; she is willing to do whatever her mother deems best. They meet thereafter more frequently, — but always as before in the *salon*, in the presence of the family: there is no wooing;

there are no private walks and talks; there is, in short, no romance in creole courtship; — everything is arranged and determined by the heads of both families. Her betrothal is circulated as a piece of private news throughout society; but no printed mention of it is ever made. Finally the notary is called, and the marriage contract drawn up, after a strictly business manner; she has rarely anything to do with these preliminaries, but the future husband, if a man of the world, will be careful to read the contract very attentively, and to discuss its provisions, point by point. It is, in fact, a decided weakness to omit these formal considerations of the financial side of marriage. More than one proud or sensitive man has had reason late in life to regret the impulse of trust or affection which caused him to sign his marriage contract without examining it. But the *fiancée* had nothing to do with this: she is content to leave her parents to make every possible effort to secure her material happiness.

Marriage opens to her a larger sphere of life. She can go out freely, visit friends, entertain relatives at her home, and — in these more recent years — even occasionally enter stores. But such comparative freedom has its disadvantages. It involves a round of social duties more or less wearisome, — visits during the heated hours of the day, and the wearing of black close-fitting Parisian dresses in an atmosphere and under a sun more difficult to endure than any summer conditions of the temperate zone. Probably she feels relieved when at a later day the cares of her household and children enable her to excuse herself from taking further part in active social life; and thereafter she rarely leaves home, except to go to church.

III

For more than two centuries such has been the monotonous, half-cloistered existence of creole women in the French colonies. Such a life might have been

Josephine's had she wedded a merchant or planter of Martinique, instead of a soldier. In the past century and before it, slavery and wealth made the existence of the creole woman more luxurious: there were more social pleasures for her also,—more parties, receptions, amusements,—especially in the capital, Fort Royal, where the Governor held a veritable court. Furthermore, the flower of creole society passed much of its time at Paris, and exercised some influence in the *Métropole*. But in the colony proper, the creole girl has no free joyous girlhood, no prospect of larger liberty save through marriage, and no romance of love. Yet, notwithstanding these apparent disadvantages, the *demoiselles* of the last century were famed throughout the world for their charm of manner and singular beauty.

Climate and other tropical conditions had quite transformed the colonial race within a few generations, changing not only complexion and temperament, but

the very shape of the skeleton, — lengthening the limbs, making delicate the extremities, deepening the orbits to protect the eye from the immense light. The creole became more lithe and refined of aspect than the European parent, — taller but more slender, — more supple, though less strong; and that grace which is the particular characteristic of Latin blood would seem to have obtained its utmost possible physical expression in the women of Martinique. The colony was justly proud of them; their reputation abroad had become romantic; and legends of their witchery were being circulated the world over. So much was their influence feared that the home government passed a special law forbidding any of its colonial officials to marry creoles, lest the discharge of diplomatic duties should be directed by some charming woman's will, rather than by the will of the sovereign. Yet, in a few years more, a creole woman was to share the throne of the first Napoleon, and sway the

destinies of Europe by her gentle counsel, — that Josephine de la Pagerie, of Trois-Islets, whose memory lives in the beautiful marble statue erected in the *Savane* of Fort-de-France, by the citizens of the colony.

IV

There is another Martinique memory, which one cannot pass over in speaking of the creole beauties of former days. Robert, a tiny village on the southeast coast, has a legend which once gave it quite as much distinction as Trois-Islets. Robert, or at least one of its suburbs, claimed to be the birthplace of another lovely creole, who became, it was alleged, no less a personage than the Sultana-Validé of Selim III. More than one historian seems to have given credit to this story, M. Sidney Daney, in his 'Histoire de la Martinique,' even published her portrait, with the inscription beneath: 'Aimée Dubuc De Rivéry, Sultana-Validé, et mère de Mahmoud II.

— A pretty face, with hair powdered and çombed back after the early fashion of the eighteenth century, and that soft roundness of lines suggesting the ripeness of sixteen years, — when the slender child is just passing into the beauty of womanhood.

The legend is said to have inspired a novel, which I was not able to find in the colony; it is perhaps long out of print. The pages of M. Sidney Daney,[1] who treats the story as a historical event, probably form the best authority for it. According to this writer Mademoiselle Aimée Dubuc Dérivry was born on the Pointe Royale plantation at Robert in December, 1766, — three years later than Josephine. She was the child of one of the oldest and most distinguished creole families of Martinique. She was sent to France at an early age to be educated, and passed several years in a convent school at Nantes. At

[1] *Histoire de la Martinique, depuis la colonisation jusqu'en* 1815. Par M. Sidney Daney, Membre du Conseil Colonial de la Martinique. Fort-Royal: 1844. See vol. iv, p. 234.

the age of eighteen she was called home, and embarked from the same port in charge of a governess. The vessel was attacked and captured by an Algerian corsair, and Aimée, her governess, and other passengers were taken to Algiers and sold as slaves. The beauty of the young creole attracted the notice of the Dey, who, desiring to gain the friendship of the Sultan, bought the girl and sent her as a present to Selim III at Constantinople. There, it was alleged, she became first the favorite, and afterward Sultana-Validé — as the mother, in 1785, of Mahmoud II, who ascended the Ottoman throne in 1808. Such is the legend, in its briefest possible form.

To those familiar with Turkish history, the narrative is palpably absurd. But it is still believed in the colony, notwithstanding its disproval by a more careful writer than Daney, — M. Pierre Régis Dessalles, in a note attached to one of the chapters of his 'Annales du Conseil Souverain de la

Martinique.'[1] Dessalles, disciplined to exactitude by his legal profession, never set down a statement without thorough examination of fact, and had to aid him all the *Archives de la Marine*, — among which are preserved in France all important colonial documents, since climate and insects render the perfect conservation of papers impossible in the tropics. From these he found the history of the De Rivéry, or Dérivry family, — the latter spelling being the official one. The father was Henri Jacob Dubuc Dérivry, of the parish of Robert, who married (24th May, 1773) Demoiselle Marie Anne Arbousset, belonging to a family illustrious in Martinique history. By this marriage he had three children: —

1. Marie-Anne, born April 5, 1774; died November 28, 1775.

2. Rose-Henriette-Germaine, born February 6, 1778. There is no documentary evidence in existence as to what became of

[1] Vol. ii, pp. 285, 286.

Rose-Henriette-Germaine. This is probably the girl alleged to have entered the seraglio at Constantinople, and to have had her brother (captured with her) created a pasha — Mehemet-Ali, father of Ibrahim Pasha.

3. Marie-Alexandrine-Louise-Victoire, born June 24, 1780, and married January 15, 1806, to a Monsieur Malet.

Thus the legend evaporates! Allowing for the precocity of creole women, it is still quite evident that, as Rose-Henriette-Germaine was born February 6, 1778, and the Sultan Mahmoud (her alleged son!) on July 20, 1785, the story is impossible according to the records, which allow an interval of only twelve years between the marriage of M. Dérivry and the birth of Mahmoud, at which time Rose could have been only seven or eight years old. M. Daney says she was born at Robert, December 1, 1755; but M. Dérivry was married only in 1773. Furthermore, Mahmoud II was not the son of Selim III! Yet, in

spite of these hard facts, the legend is still believed; the colony still boasts of its Aimée Dérivry as a mother of Sultans; and faded MS. documents — some of which I have read, and copied myself — are shown to strangers as proof of the romantic story.

All that is certain is that about a hundred years ago some young creole girl of the Dubuc family was sent to France for her education, and was never seen again by her parents; that many strange stories were related accounting for the mystery of her disappearance, some cruel, some improbable, all false; that her relatives went to Europe and spent years in vain efforts to discover a trace of her; and that meanwhile there sprang up this legend of her fate, still told with pride to strangers in the colony, over a glass of sugar syrup and rum, by hospitable planters.

V

But though the old order of creole life remains almost unchanged, that life has

shrunk into much smaller channels, and has undergone many modifications. The wealth and indolent luxury of the eighteenth century have become memories. The influence of the race upon home politics has totally ceased. The race itself is rapidly disappearing from the islands. Except among the few survivors of the old régime you may now seek in vain for that proud, fine type of valiant and vigorous manhood, once the honor of colonial France. With the abolition of slavery and the introduction of universal suffrage, the new social conditions became almost unbearable for the formerly dominant class, — with its intense conservatism. Naturally the men of strong individuality suffered most in the hopeless war of race prejudice and race politics provoked by a too speedy conferring of political rights upon a population of slaves; and the more energetic whites found themselves forced to emigrate elsewhere. Those powerful characters who had given the old creole life all its dignity and

stability vanished from the scene; and the remnant of the whites softened down into that condition of dull, inert, flaccid existence which is their portion to-day. The social conditions of the time of the monarchy have been, indeed, almost reversed: the dark population, multiplying with wonderful rapidity ever since emancipation, is crowding the white population out of the islands; and the former slave race is now politically the dominant one. It seems more than possible that the white creole race will have disappeared from all the French West Indies within a few more generations, — certainly from Martinique.

How much the creole white woman has suffered in this race contest may only be understood by those long familiar with colonial life. With the decline of caste dignity and caste prosperity her existence necessarily becomes more and more narrowed, and her future vaguer in its promises of happiness. Something of her present life may be divined from its invisibility;

still more from the fact that it is dominated by a religious influence which strictly regulates and limits her diversions, her reading, and the boundaries of her knowledge. She has lost that graceful haughtiness once the particular characteristic of her race; she has also, perhaps, lost something of that aristocratic gift of fine tact which formerly distinguished her as a daughter of statesmen; she is becoming something of a *bourgeoise*. Her chances in life are also growing cruelly small. Probably the white female population now considerably exceeds the male; yet weddings are infrequent, and their number yearly grows less. Among the modern creoles, the size of a girl's dowry has most to do with influencing a match; marriages are rather dependent upon business considerations and social connections in relation to business prospects, than upon mutual affection. It was not so in the old days: marriage was then regarded as a social duty; and even the laxity of tropical morals in slave times

rarely prevented any man from fulfilling that social duty, and abandoning all reckless living after a certain age. The change in colonial ideas in this respect has been attributed to moral degeneracy, — to class conservatism in creole relations with the foreign element, — to various other causes. It is simply the result of poverty! The old conditions were wholly artificial, — wholly based upon the institution of slavery, supported by a strong monarchical government; and the true character of that structure is now being revealed by the fact that the white race cannot hold its own in the colonies.

Only those who remember monarchical times can decide how far the creole girl has been changed by the new conditions; the foreigner, of course, has few opportunities for observing her. Does she still possess that exotic charm which in other years lifted her to the throne of empire, and inspired that exquisite white dream in marble which still stands in the Savannah of Fort-

de-France—between the Rivière Madame and the Rivière Monsieur? Does she still keep that fine witchery which frightened the foolish Métropole long ago into the utterance of the law that no French official in the colonies should marry a creole? I do not know. But it is sadly true that she is bearing more than her share of the penalty for the errors made by her fathers in the past — those errors of slavery, that have not even yet been expiated. And it is also true that many a fair proud girl — perhaps more than one with princely blood in her veins—seeks escape at last from the dull formality of an aimless and hopeless existence, by returning forever to the convent of her child-days; knowing nothing of the higher joys or deeper pains of life, and so the more innocently eager to transmute into religious ecstasy and penance that strength of love and that divine desire of self-sacrifice for some one's sake which are attributes of woman's soul.

ARABESQUES

ARABIAN WOMEN

ALTHOUGH sensitiveness to beauty — the æsthetic sense — is not in itself a capacity by which the comparative civilization of races may be fully estimated, it is at least an indication of the possession of powers which under favoring circumstances would enable the people possessing it to occupy a high rank in the hierarchy of nations. When found among semi-savage peoples, it gives us the right to believe that such peoples have been or might yet be the founders of civilizations; and in these days, when the study of Oriental history and ethnology is making such rapid progress, especial interest attaches to the evidences of the æsthetic sense in the earliest literature of the nations of the East. In this regard, no Oriental literature possesses so natural a charm as that of the Arabs, — particularly, perhaps, from the fact that in

it is preserved every link in the history of the wonderful evolution of the æsthetic sense, — from the primitive desert-chant to the elaborate literature of the Golden Prime of Islam, — from the first camel-skin tents to the glories of Saracenic architecture in Spain and India, — from the simplicity of nomad life between sand and sun, to the luxurious era of El Rashid and El Mamoun, of which the memory still lingers in the world like a breath of perfume, like a golden afterglow, like the throbbing in the brain after some wondrous music has died away. This literature is vast and variform; it were useless to attempt in any limited space to speak, even of the titles of its main branches, — or even to touch ever so lightly upon those branches which deal especially with the sense of the beautiful. But the memory of the student, culling here and there a blossom of the poetical flora whose odor is most grateful to his special literary sense, can at least present the reader with a bouquet of

fancies curious enough to interest if not beautiful enough, perhaps, to charm. If there be any particular subject the poetical treatment of which is the best evidence of the æsthetic sense, it is the beauty of woman, — and we confine our gleanings to this particular domain.

From time immemorial, before the coming of Mahomet, the desert Arabs were wont not only to honor poets highly, but to hold periodical assemblies at which poetical contests took place, the contestants being stimulated by the promise of a prize or the signal honor of having their compositions hung up in the precincts of the temples as almost-inspired masterpieces. Six out of the many victors at these ante-islamic poetical exhibitions obtained such fame that their names are still familiar to all the desert-tribes, and their poems have been preserved for us almost unchanged, — marvelous specimens of simple, beautiful, but savage genius. Naturally the field of

the desert-poet had but little variation; his subjects were few and simple — the fine qualities of thoroughbred horses or camels, the triumph of battle, the lament of defeat, the joy of the chase, the beauty of a mistress. This very limitation of subject, together with the monotonous sameness of nomad life in all ages and as far as the sands extend, by increasing the difficulty of the art, renders its charming expression more wonderful to modern minds. To describe the beauty of woman, the modern poet can summon to his aid the whole art of civilization, the varied knowledge of three thousand years, the charm of all things that charm — jewels, music, flowers, birds, ivories of China and the Indies, colors of the Pacific, Greek and Etruscan arts, the melody and passion of a hundred wonderful languages. The Arab, knowing no language but his own, seeing ever about him the yellow waste, above him the unvarying blue, — ignorant of all arts save those of war and the chase, — was

able to create masterpieces of language which the most learned men of our own day cannot speak of without admiration, — poems virile, supple, ardent as the desert itself and as sun-colored. Translations of these are now printed in most European languages.

Symbolism, so infinitely rich in the nineteenth century, was necessarily meagre in the deserts of Arabia before the advent of Mahomet, and the Arab lover knew of but few things to which he might compare the beauty of her he loved: comely animals and simple objects familiar to dwellers in tents constituted the bulk of his poetical stock of similes. In the neighborhood of the cities he might see other objects suited to the evocation of graceful fancies, as when he compared the loosened tresses of an Arab girl falling over her face, to 'the graceful drooping of the flexible vine over its trellis-work.' But he generally confined his symbolism to desert-subjects, — the palm, the ostrich, the gazelle, the wild

cattle of the stony hills, the antelopes, — the weapons of his people; for in all countries the eyebrow of the fair has ever been Love's bow, her gaze its arrows, her glance their barbed points that may not be readily withdrawn from the heart.

Strange some of these Arab comparisons of beauty seem, yet they are never uncouth, never commonplace or feeble. 'Graceful her waist as a nabak-branch; elegant her stature as a palm,' says one who had never heard the words of Solomon. Another compares the beauties of Nahous to ostriches, with good effect: 'The girls of the neighborhood of Nahous have made thee sick for love by reason of their cadenced walk; measured their steps are like those of the ostrich.' All the Arabian poets have alternately compared the eyes of their women to those of the wild antelope, the gazelle, or the desert cow — sharing the last mentioned simile with Homer. Nor was the nomad troubadour ashamed to

compare the graces of his beloved to those of a fine steed. 'My beauty,' cries El-Acha, 'slenderly graceful as a young mare, lithe of flank! . . . the curves of her bosom are as the curves of heaven aglow with light. . . . Woman enchantress! were she but to lean a moment on the body of a dead man, surely he would arise again!' Another sings of captive maidens 'beautiful as wild desert cows.' Nabiga, one of the greatest of the early poets, is fond of a similar comparison, but uses also the gazelle as a more graceful symbol: 'She hath gazed upon thee with the gaze of a young gazelle, tame, swarthy of hue, sable-eyed and decked with a necklace of strung pearls.'

But aside from mere poetical comparisons, we find the Arabs had a well-ordinated law of beauty, which even a Greek sculptor could scarcely have found fault with, although more severe in some respects than the Hellenic ideal. The Arab's estimate is based on a consummate know-

ledge of comparative artistic anatomy,—the rare knowledge of an accomplished stockraiser applied to human anatomy, physiology and osteology. So minute, indeed, are the descriptions of female beauty in the old Arabian poets that they can seldom be faithfully translated; the general idea can alone be given. There were recognized laws of beauty for every finger of the hand, every separate toe of the foot. Every dimple had a special name. That of the chin was called *nounah;* that at the corner of the lips, *rababah;* the little hollow of the upper lip, immediately beneath the nasal cartilage, *djirtkimah;* the hollow of the throat, between the collar-bones, *thograh;* the dimple of the thumb-joint, near the wrist, *koult.*

Furthermore, there was not merely one recognized type of beauty; there were several types. A woman was called *melihah,* beautiful, only if so charming that every time looked at she seemed more graceful than before. A woman was called *djemilah*

if merely pretty, — if seeming to be exquisitely lovely at a distance but only graceful near by. The curve of beauty — the magical line whose secret is popularly supposed to have been known only to the Greeks, was also known to the Arabs, though they did not perhaps ever succeed in expressing it in ivory or marble; and could only find poetical comparisons for it in the undulation of waves or the rounded outlines of the sandbillows. Lips slightly pouting apart, so as to show a pearly gleam within, were also considered a beautiful possession. 'Why are thy lips so sweetly open?' asks a desert poet of his beloved. 'Eh!' she replied, 'when the fig ripeneth to give its honey it openeth; the rose openeth also when the dew cometh to kiss it.' Complexion was also a subject of æsthetic study, — especially in regard to smoothness and clearness of skin, being compared to ivory rarely, often to the shell of the ostrich-eggs, — a simile used by Mahomet in his description of the girls of Paradise.

Flexibility of the joints was considered essential to womanly perfection; and Nabiga describes a 'delicate hand, whose fingers are like the stalks of the *anam* that may be tied into a knot, so flexible they are.' A perfectly straight nose was not thought especially beautiful; the Arabs believed aquiline features to indicate a finer human thoroughbredness and force of character. Often the curve of a woman's nose is compared to 'the curve of a fine sabre well-furbished.' Rounded cheeks were held in abhorrence; the nomad considered fleshiness a sign of inferior blood; and 'smooth flat cheeks, like polished silver,' are highly praised. 'She hath no stoutness; sleek she is, and full-hipped' is said of a fine woman by an Arab admirer, who expressed the view of his people that solid flesh, not adipose tissue, should give the line of beauty. 'Flesh firm as the fruit of a ripening pomegranate.' The hair of a woman was indeed one of her chief glories; but a certain thickness, heaviness, and glossiness was de-

manded, and a poet did not think it ungallant to compare such tresses to the black splendor of his stallion's mane or sweeping tail.

Operating upon a race thus imbued with æsthetic ideas and learned in the minutest details of physical completeness, the law of natural selection could not fail to produce remarkable results. Tribes were proud of special characteristics of beauty, transmitted from generation to generation. Thus the Kodaides were famed for the beauty of foot and leg; the Kindides, for the slender elegance of their flexible waists; the Khozaides, for the graceful delicacy of both upper and lower limbs; the Ozrides, or Beni-Azra, for the eyes of their women not less than their famed liability to die of love. When the poet El-Asmai was asked by Haroun El Rashid to describe in verse the beauty of a slave, he was obliged to cite from the desert Arabs: —

She hath the members of a Kinanide,
The rounded loveliness of a Saidide,
The beautiful eyes of a Hilalide,
The graceful mouth of a Tayide.

Islam, indeed, quenched the creative genius of Arabian poetry; but the pagan songs were sung even to the days of the last Caliph, and when some Commander of the Faithful paid his court poet a thousand pieces of gold for describing a slave, the poet seldom relied upon his own powers of improvization, but simply quoted the words of the ancient nomads, — the tamers of horses and breeders of fine camels, — which had been bequeathed by memory from generation to generation. When Abd-el-Melik, fifth Caliph of the house of Ommaya, wanted to know how to choose a woman for her beauty, it was not to a court poet or learned littérateur that he found it necessary to address his questions, but to a herder of camels, — a desert Arab, — a man of the Beni-Ratafan. The nomad's answer is remarkable; his description is

absolutely sculpturesque, with a sculpturesqueness that suggests the bland smoothness, the fluent grace of a fine bronze. Its artistic perfection apologizes for its nudity, and yet we prefer to quote it in the French of the Orientalist who first gave it European publicity: —

'Prends la femme aux pieds bien unis, aux talons légers et delicats, aux jambes fines et lisses, aux genoux dégagés et dessinés, aux cuisses pleines et arrondies, aux bras potelés, aux mains déliées et fines, à la gorge relevée et ferme, aux joues rosées, aux yeux noirs et vifs, au front beau et ouvert, au nez aquilin et fier, à la bouche et aux dents fraîches et douces, à la chevelure d'un noir foncé, au cou souple et moëlleux, au ventre effacé et gracieusement ondulé.'

'But where,' asked the Caliph in astonishment, 'can such a woman be found?'

The other replied: 'Thou mayst find such a one among the Arabs of unmixed blood and the Persians of pure race.'

Neither must it be forgotten that for

those desert beauties '*Kohl* was the best of adornments and water the most excellent of perfumes.'

But it was in the time of the Abbasside Caliphs that the Arabian sensitiveness to beauty obtained its supremest gratifications and that the luxury of loveliness reached such an extreme as the Greek world never knew. The demand for beautiful slaves brought to light human marvels who would certainly have been well worthy to serve as models to Praxiteles or Lysippus, — creatures so beautiful that there seems to be good reason to believe the historians who declare that many who saw them died of love. Islam had a surplus of slaves, yet the pearls of its harems were paid for with the price of a province. The age when a Caliph could expend upon his marriage festivities the enormous sum of 50,000,000 dinars — about $140,000,000 — was naturally the era of splendid slavery and of the insolence of beauty. Abou ibn Atik, one of

the handsomest men of his era, and possessed of a most beautiful wife whom he dearly loved, says (writing in the far earlier days of Abd-el-Melik) that he saw slaves so beautiful that on seeing them he felt 'as one in hell who should behold hopelessly the delights of Paradise.' But those girls were certainly not to be compared with the beauties of the court of Haroun or El Mamoun, for whom the whole eastern world had been searched. The proudest of Greek sculptors would scarcely have ventured to chisel upon the pedestal of his masterpiece: 'THIS IS THE SUPREME BEAUTY.' But the possessors of splendid girls did not hesitate to place upon their human statues inscriptions to the effect: 'THIS IS THE MASTERPIECE OF GOD.' Nothing can give a better idea of the extravagant luxury of the age than the translation of inscriptions graven upon fillets worn by these girls, or upon their girdles, or upon their fans.

'Behind Haroun El Rashid,' says the poet, Abou 'l Hassam, 'I saw girl slaves

standing so beautiful that they seemed like magnificent statues. Fillets inlaid with rubies and with pearls clasped their smooth brows; and to these were attached thin plates of gold bearing Arab verses inscribed. One of these bore the words: —

> Cruel one, thou hast disdained my love! — oh, God will judge between us!

On another: —

> What doth it avail me to cast at thee the shafts of my gaze — they do not reach thee. Thou hast shot thine at me, and they have smitten me, — cruel that thou art.

A third bore the inscription: —

> To submit one's cheek to the touch of love is to make oneself greater.

But these three pale into commonplaceness before the magnificent insolence of the fourth: —

> I am a deserter from the houris of Paradise; I have been created to make trouble in the hearts of those who gaze upon me.

Worthy to compare with the above is the following which El-Asmai saw graven

upon the fillets of beautiful slaves in Haroun's palace: —

We are young and bewitching beauties from the fields of Paradise.
God hath lavished his gifts upon us; in us there is naught to reproach.
For the love of God, sweet damozel, let me not languish for love!

And this on the girdle of a beauteous slave: —

A single wink of thine eye, a teasing touch of thy hand, will be enough to unclasp it.
For my heart is so feeble that it could almost leap from my breast.
The sight of only a part of my beauty suffices to disturb thy soul.

We quote a few more at random — graven on the fillets of El Rashid's slaves: —

Say, O men! in heaven's name is it a sun that shines beneath that fillet, or is it the fair crescent of the nights?
Is life possible without the follies of love? Nay, then! flee the sight of beautiful eyes.

Rich men of Bagdad followed the exam-

ple. One El Natify had a slave on whose fillet was written: —

Seduction and the power that teaseth hearts flash from mine eye when it gazeth. Turn, unhappy man, turn away thine eye from mine eye!

On the fillet of Ward (Rose) slave of Mahany, was written: —

She is finished, all finished the beauty of her features; — nothing beyond her beauty is possible in this world.

For other mortals there is but one crescent in every month; but for me the crescent of beauty riseth daily upon the brow of Ward.

And there is a delicious coquetry in this inscription, traced with henna upon the hand of a slave-girl: —

It is not the beauty of henna that doth embellish my hand; 't is the beauty of my hand that doth heighten the beauty of the henna.

Girl-pages, attired like men, sometimes like soldiers, were also fashionable. One of these is spoken of as having worn a helmet on which was engraved: 'Admire the beauty of this slave; never can thine eye

learn to define it. Is she male or female; yes, 't is a woman! aye, 't is a man!'

And on her sword-belt was graven: —

The sword of her eyes doth not suffice her, — that terrible sword that striketh down the keenest sabres. How dare I remain between those two swords! Let thee behold but once this proud beauty marching in warrior-garb, with her twofold apparatus of slaughter; and thou wilt learn that the scimitar of her glance is even more terrible than the scimitar that is wielded with both hands.

The rage for beautiful slaves and exquisite dresses and inscribed girdles increased greatly under Haroun's reign; and the art of the poet was more than ever in demand. Even the tapestries, the coverings of furniture, were adorned with appropriate inscriptions, of which the following on a divan is a fair sample: —

More ravishing, more delicious than wine and the perfume of roses, is the group of two lovers, with cheek pressed against cheek. . . .
The one speaking of the troubles that he feels; the other telling of the love within her heart.

Or this, upon a fan: —

I bring a tender breath of air; with me rosy shame doth play:
I serve as a veil to the amorous mouth that pouts for a kiss.

And some of the kisses of those days, too, have become historical; we read of a single kiss being paid for with two pearls worth forty thousand drachmas. The giver was no caliph, but a private citizen who sold his property to buy the pearls, and gave them away on the easy condition that the girl should take them from his lips with hers.

The tendency of such splendid voluptuousness, extravagance, and luxury has been the same in all civilized countries; the results similarly lamentable: national enervation, indolence, loss of patriotism and warrior-daring, loss of moral principle, death of ethical sentiment. Pleasure ruined the Caliphate as it ruined Rome. Abou Nouwas, Haroun's court poet, wrote two

poems, of which two fragments reveal the whole history of the moral decadence of Islam. The first fragment is not without beauty: —

Ruby the wine and pearl the cup in the hands of the beautiful slave with waist so slender and voluptuous.
Ravishing the beauty who giveth thee to drink at once of her gaze and of her hand! Thus art thou ever seized with two intoxications.

But the second fragment gives us the dismal sequel: —

Multiply thy sins to the utmost; for thou art to meet an indulgent God.
When thou comest before Him thou wilt gnaw thy hands with regret for those pleasures thou didst avoid through fear of hell.

RABYAH'S LAST RIDE

A TRADITION OF PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

THIS is the relation of the death of Rabyah, son of Mokaddem, of the Beni-Firaz, according to the legend transmitted from generation unto generation by the *rawis*, or reciters of poems and of great deeds.

And it is written down in the commentary which Abou Zakariyah Yahyah-al-Tibrizi made upon those mighty poems chanted before Islam which are called *Hamasah*, — a word signifying all that is stalwart and noble in a man, — and in the *Hamasah* the place of the legend of Rabyah is in the second book, which is the 'Book of Dirges.' But the tale hath also been told by Al-Maidani, and by Abou Riyash; and it is likewise preserved in the great *Kitab-al-Aghani*, or 'Book of Songs,' collected and written down by Abou 'l Faraj Al' Ispahani, who devoted fifty years alone to

the study of the poems and the legends of the Desert Arabs of old.

Rabyah, son of Mokaddem, of the Beni-Firaz, was famed as the bravest and the strongest and the most generous of his tribe what time he lived, and he was celebrated as an escort. For from the day that he had, single-handed, as a very young man, successfully defended his bride, Raytah, against the horsemen of the Beni-Djoucham on a foray, the women deemed it no little honor to have Rabyah as their escort. And no woman ever intrusted herself to the protection of Rabyah for a journey to whom any mishap befell while he remained with her.

Now on the day of his death Rabyah was escorting a caravan of women through the country of the Beni-Sulaim, and he was the only horseman with them. For though there had been blood between the Beni-Firaz and the Beni-Sulaim, the price of blood had been paid, and it was thought

peace had been brought about. And the mother and sister of Rabyah were with the caravan.

And all that land was yellow and dry as long-dead bone; and it was strewn with great stones that seemed to have been rained down from heaven with fire, so seared and so blackened they were. And the pass leading to their own country — the Pass of Ghazal — was still far off when Rabyah, looking back, saw a distant rising of dust, like the smoke of a fire newly kindled. Now Rabyah rode upon his favorite gray mare, Ghezala, whom no desert steed might ever overtake, but he rode slowly for the sake of the women, who were mounted upon camels.

So he drew rein, and gazed at the dust cloud, and perceived a gleam break through it, and another, and another, and many glimmerings — a lightning of lances. And looking a little while longer, he could discern a company of men in helms of iron and shirts of mail, riding upon lean black

horses; and as they sped swiftly he knew the helm of the horsemen that led them — Nubaishah, of whom it was said that Death, the Mother of Vultures, ever rode with him.

Then Rabyah spurred in haste after the women, and urged on faster the toiling camels, and said unto his mother: 'There is treachery, O mother! Lo! Nubaishah, the son of Habib, pursueth us with the wild men of Sulaim.' And even as he spoke, the far-off drum-roll of galloping hoofs brake heavily upon their ears through the hot and thirsty air.

And turning his mare round, Rabyah added: 'Haste ye toward the Pass, while I strive to hold them back; and I shall meet ye all at the Pass, to hold it so that ye can reach our tents and arouse the horsemen.'

And he rode to meet the wild men of Sulaim, while the women urged their beasts faster over the dusty path.

Then Rabyah's sister, Oumm 'Amr, cried out in fear, and those with her la-

mented, as they saw Rabyah ride back all alone. But his mother, Oumm Saiyar, chided them, saying: —

'While there remaineth so much as one drop of blood in his veins, no son of mine will ever fail to do the deeds of a man and the duty of a man. Have no fear, ye foolish ones! when did Rabyah ever fail to protect a woman? How many such robbers as those hath he not harassed ere this, even as lizards in their desert holes are harassed with a stick? How many an enemy's corpse hath he not left to be devoured by the lions of the woods, by the ancient eagles of the hills? In how many encounters hath he not been hard pressed before — ay, even tightly pressed as the sandal strap between the toes of the wearer? Know ye not that my son is unto men as a beacon-light — ay, as the signal-fires that be lighted upon mountain-tops?'

Yet Rabyah's sister only would not be comforted, and she wept and said: 'Surely my brother hath never before been placed

in any peril like unto this peril, for the men of Sulaim are many, and it hath ever been said of Nubaishah that Death, the Mother of Vultures, rides with him.'

But Oumm Saiyar answered her sharply: 'He that feareth death, verily death shall find him, though he have a ladder long enough to climb to heaven upon. Better is death than shame! Fear rather for thine own honor, girl — urge on thy beast while Rabyah holds them back!'

Then Rabyah, alone, strove against all the swarm of Sulaim.

Now in Arabia there was no archer more skilful than Rabyah, and he bent his bow against the pursuers; and with his first shaft he pierced the throat of a son of Sulaim, so that the horseman died upon his horse, and with his second he nailed the thigh of another to the ribs of his animal, and with a third he shattered the sword-arm of the strongest Sulaimite; and seeing that it was Rabyah, the men of Sulaim

fled from his archery; and he drove them back yet farther, sending his arrows humming like Djinns behind them. And when he had thus kept them back a good while, he turned and rode after the women again.

Then the men of Sulaim rode furiously in pursuit of him, and shot arrows after him in vain. For though all the black horses strove until they were sweating like well-filled water-skins in the great heat, only Nubaishah's stallion could follow after Rabyah's gray mare; and the gray mare's skin remained dry.

And so soon as Rabyah — after having urged on the toiling camels of the women still faster — turned once more and laid an arrow across his bow, the drum-beat of pursuing hoofs broke up into a sound of scraping and of stumbling, while the men of Sulaim scattered and drew back in dismay. And many times Rabyah thus checked them. Only Nubaishah, the son of Habib, ever sat firm upon his black stallion

and faced the humming shaft, and dexterously avoided it or turned it from him with marvelous surety of eye and trueness of hand.

So, fleeing and turning, halting and proceeding, pursuers and pursued ever drew nearer to the jagged teeth of the western hills; and in the black-toothed line of them appeared the bright gap of the Pass of Ghazal, ever widening and brightening as they rode. And now the great stones upon the way made long black shadows over the plain; for the sun was setting before them. So they rode into the edge of the shadow of the hills, and Rabyah turned to make a last stand, and the pounding of the pursuing hoofs became a shuffling once again as the band of Sulaim drew rein in a cloud of dust. But now in Rabyah's quiver there were no more shafts.

Then Oumm Saiyar cried out to him from afar off: 'Sword and spear, son! Sword and spear for the women of the Beni-Firaz! Give them sword and spear

for thy mother's sake, for thine own Raytah, who waiteth in the tent.'

And again and again did Rabyah charge them with spear and sword, scattering them even as a hawk scattereth quails. Only Nubaishah, the son of Habib, fled not, but yielded way cunningly to let him pass, and always thereafter circled menacing about him, like a vulture sweeping close to the sand.

And it happened at last that as Rabyah bore down upon a man of Sulaim, Nubaishah suddenly circled by him rapidly as a whirling wind, and thrust with his lance as he whirled, and the lance-blade burst its way through Rabyah's shirt of Persian mail and into his entrails.

And Nubaishah laughed, and drew back the blade of his wet spear between his stallion's ears, and smelled the odor of the blood upon it, and shouted, 'Thou hast thy death-wound, O Rabyah!' For never had swarthy Nubaishah lifted his spear against a man to slay him and failed in his

purpose — so keen his eye, so subtle his hand.

But Rabyah, seeking to deceive him for the women's sake, shouted back with all the deep power of his voice, 'Thou liest in thy throat, Nubaishah!'

And Nubaishah laughed again, and shook his head in scorn, and circled away among his men.

Then Rabyah rode after the women swiftly, sitting firm as a tower despite his pain; and even at the Pass of Ghazal he came up with his mother, as he had promised, and he said to her, 'O mother, give me to drink! I have received my death-wound.'

And Oumm Saiyar looked upon the wound — a ghastly wound, that gaped even as the mouth of a camel with divided lip.

But she was of the race of eagles, and she answered him, tearlessly, 'Nay, my son, for if I give thee to drink now thou diest, and we would then be taken and put

to shame, and while even one drop of blood lives in thy veins, O son of mine, thy duty remains to stand in defence of the weakness of woman and the honor of thy people. Turn back, son of Mokaddem! Turn and smite them while thy strength lasts, and bear the thirst for thy mother's sake; yet suffer me first to bind up thy wound.'

And while she strove to bind it with her veil — for that was all she had to bind it with — Rabyah murmured to her, 'O mother, the sons of Firaz have indeed lost him they were wont to call their battle-hawk — their deep-diving hawk of battle — him they held precious unto them as fire-shining gold. They have lost their darling horseman, O mother!'

But Oumm Saiyar said to him, as she knotted tightly the long veil about his wound: 'Son, are we not of mighty Thalabah's stock, and Malik's breed, whose daily lot is bereavement? Well hath it been said that among us no man dieth in his tent! What is the record of our race but

an outpouring of ghosts from the clash of battle, even as the spark-flood's perpetual gush from the grinding of swords? Yet thou knowest that blood of ours is never shed without vengeance; and when one of us falleth, straightway another riseth up to do the deeds of a man — to help the weak, to strive with them that are mighty for evil. Bear thou the thirst for thy people's sake; turn now, O son, and smite them stoutly while thy strength endures.'

And Rabyah turned back again, while the women fled; and once more he scattered the band of Sulaim, and drove them before him, and held all the Pass. And he sat guarding the narrow way, upon his gray mare.

Then fell and died the day, in awful passion of fire, behind the Pass, and against the mighty glow, as in a flame, the horseman towered like a Djinn.

And the sons of Sulaim drew afar off, and watched Rabyah — as vultures wait and watch, pluming themselves, about the

place where a lion lieth down to die. And because they would not again attack Rabyah, Nubaishah mocked them with rhymes piercing as the iron of lances. But they could not be moved to approach him; and Nubaishah foamed at the mouth like a camel that hath eaten bitter herbs. . . . And the night came.

But Rabyah, remaining in the shadow of the Pass, felt that his ghost was about to depart from him. And bending to the ear of his slim gray mare, he whispered unto her, softly, 'Stand thou still, darling; stand still as a stone for the love of me!' Then he pressed the foot of his long spear into the ground, even as he sat upon her, and leaned upon it.

And in the darkness his ghost went out from him.

But ever, as a king sitteth upon his throne, so Rabyah sat upon his mare; and ever the gray mare stood still as a stone for the love of him.

Over the black desert of the sky slowly

moved the long white caravan of the stars; and the night waned. But dead Rabyah still sat upon his mare; and the beautiful mare stood as a graven image standeth, for the love of him.

Until the cheek of the morning reddened, as for shame; and Nubaishah saw that Rabyah's head drooped, as though he slept upon his mare.

Then Nubaishah called unto him an archer of Khuzaah, a mighty man to bend the bow; and he asked the archer, 'Hast thou an arrow left, my son?'

And the man looked to where Rabyah was, and replied, fearfully, 'One only — and it is for my life.'

But Nubaishah said: 'Thy life is safe now. Shoot the arrow, my son; shoot at the gray mare.'

And the mare saw the arrow coming, and leaped aside; and Rabyah fell upon his face. Then, for the first time, all the men of Sulaim knew that he was dead; and they sent up a great shout.

And they went up to where he lay, and looked upon him, and wondered, and they spoiled him of his helm and his broken shirt of mail, and his lance and sword, and his sandals. But the mare had fled toward the tents of the Beni-Firaz, and none might overtake her.

And swart Nubaishah muttered: 'There was no other like him among the men of Firaz. I almost repent me to have slain him.'

And a wild man of Sulaim, marveling, smote the foot of his spear into the dead man's eye, and cried aloud, in the uncouthness of his admiration, 'God curse thee! — a man who defendeth his women even after he is dead!'

But Oumm Saiyar and the women had reached the tents of the Beni-Firaz, and aroused the tribe. And the best men of the camp sprung to horse in haste, and rode fiercely to the Pass of Ghazal; but they only found Rabyah lying there, naked

and dead, and the vultures circling above him. And leaving him there, they pursued so furiously after the sons of Sulaim that the long way smoked beneath them; yet they could not overtake them.

So they rode back to where Rabyah lay, and they buried him there, with great mourning, in the place of his last and greatest deed. And they built above him a hill of black stones to mark the spot, and in the midst thereof, at the summit, they set up a great white stone, shaped like the back of a camel.

And never thereafter — until the days of the Prophet — did any Arab of any tribe pass that way who did not sacrifice a camel in honor of the valiant one who had defended his women even after he was dead. (Except, indeed, Hafs, son of Al-Ahnaf, who, having but one camel, could not make the sacrifice; but he composed an immortal poem in honor of Rabyah, and his verses are still in the mouths of the Arabian people.)

And never a son of Firaz passed that way to war who did not cry out unto Rabyah: '*La tab'adan!* Abide with us! Be with us this day, O Rabyah!'

And after Islam, not less than in the Days of Ignorance, the wives of the desert horsemen prayed they might become mothers of brave tall boys worthy to bear Rabyah's name.

And whenever, in time of foray, or in days of ill fortune of war, or amid the ghastly perils of desert travel, women found themselves face to face with the fear of shame, they would cry out the name of him upon whom no woman had ever called vainly in those wild, dark days before Islam.

And Islam itself, spreading like a holy fire east and west, two hundred days' journey from India to the Sea of Darkness, bore abroad his name, and flashed it far into the black South, making it known unto the blue-eyed Touareg, whose camels dance to the sound of music — making it known

even to those swart sultans whose domains do border upon the unknown lakes of Afrikia.

And these are some of the verses that were composed in that long rolling measure which is called *Kamil*, before the sepulchre of Rabyah, by the poet Hafs, the son of Al-Ahnaf: —

Bide with us still, Rabyah, son of Mokaddem, near!
May the clouds of dawn keep green thy grave with unfailing showers . . .
My camel fled when she spied the cairn on the stony waste,
Built over one who was free of hand, most quick to give.
Start not, O camel! for sure no shape to be shunned was he —
A carouser mirthful, a mighty stirrer of battle-flame.
Long is my way, and the thirsty desert before me lies,
Else here for thee she had fallen, butchered to feast thy friends.[1]

[1] C. J. Lyall's version, as given in his admirable *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry* (London: 1885).

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